THE JOURNAL 2014—2015

To sign up for my diary of a professional writer's journey and learn by osmosis, click The Daily Journal.

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The sign in the antique shop read, "This ain't no museum. All this junk is for sale."

Same here.

I am a professional writer. This is my living. If you enjoy or learn from my work, click the Subscribe to My Work tab above. (It isn't the same as subscribing to this blog.) As an alternative, consider dropping a tip into my Tip Jar on your way out. If you've already contributed, thanks so much.

If you can't make a monetary donation, please consider forwarding this post to a friend or several. (grin) Again, thank you.

Note to the reader: Any reference to HEStanbrough.com or FrostProof808.com are invalid as of the publication of this book. All information previously contained on those websites is now on my main website at HarveyStanbrough.com.

October 19, 2014[edit]

Thanks for welcoming me into your writing life. Please remember **Dean Wesley Smith's website**. While you're there, check out the **Think Like A Publisher** and **Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing** tabs. I also recommend checking out his **Online Workshops** tab and his **Lecture Series** tab. See what he has to offer.

Rolled out at 2 a.m. this morning after lying awake for a half-hour, still psyched over the first-ever Writing Into the Dark seminar yesterday. ***If you know of any writers who are serious about the craft and whom you believe would benefit from the intensive, please recommend they contact me.*** Only a few seats left. After a few comments on email and Facebook last night (the upshot was "I'd really love to attend WITD on Oct 25 BUT") I decided October 25 (next Saturday) is probably going to be the last seminar. After that, I'll just refer folks to the **Audio Lecture on WITD**.

Around 2:15 I went to MailChimp, revived this RSS blog campaign, then decided to clean up this site a bit to get it ready. Then I started this blog post. It will go to a very small list tonight at 9 p.m. **Probably I will discontinue this list after a week or two, so *if you want to keep following this post, please subscribe through RSS (click the little sound wave icon in the sidebar).***

One note regarding subscriptions: Please do NOT share this blog far and wide. Share my "big" one over on HarveyStanbrough.com if you want to, but this one is only for professional writers who are serious about the craft and want to overcome all the BS myths we've been taught all our lives.

I hope you'll hang around and use this blog as fodder for your own motivation. Feel free to leave a comment re your own writing, how it's going, and anything else you believe might be of interest to the others. In that regard, Ann Stratton emailed me last night to send the URL for **Chuck Wendig's blog**. Might be a good one to watch. This one said, in slightly different language, what I told

you guys yesterday. And it's fun.

I was remiss in my duties as Teacher yesterday. I meant to ask what you write, especially Carol, Lynn and Mary Ann. (I know Mary Ann writes novels, but I don't know whether she also writes short fiction, for example.) So there's yet one more bit of homework for you. ***Send me an email or leave a comment below*** and let me know what you write. **And then set goals for yourself** to help you practice writing into the dark.

Another note on goal setting: Can we revise or adjust goals once they're set? Yep. Remember, they're only artificial limitations or artificial boundaries. We set goals to help ourselves, not to harm ourselves. Remember the term "realistically" and keep it in mind. For example, well, is a novel just a story that doesn't end really soon? <shrug> I don't know. I haven't studied enough yet to know that. I'm taking a workshop beginning November 5 that will help me know that, so I might revise or adjust my first-novel goal a bit. Maybe not. Maybe I'll learn enough before mid-November to still give myself that 45 days we talked about yesterday.

Okay, one other question: Does all this talk of revising or adjust goals come from my critical mind? Absolutely. And it might make me adjust my goal but it won't stop my writing At All. In my book, that's a win. (grin)

Only yesterday I taught a full day devoted to writing into the dark. In the recesses of my mind, that was a long, dark hallway with dark rooms on either side into which the writer might vary as necessary. This morning it feels like I've stepped away and am writing into the universe, sans even stars. Maybe writing into the BIG dark. It's gonna be fun.

Okay, I'm gonna grab a second mug of Kava, then to the writing 'puter for a session. It's 4:30. I'll walk about 5:45, then be back to finish this blog and give you today's totals a bit later.

7:45 Just back from my walk. Got 5.3 miles and (so far) only 196 words of fiction (on Going Back). I'm toast after teaching all day (grin)so seriously considering taking an intentional day off, watch football, chill, etc. However, the best (or worst) of intentions can be screwed up by "inspiration," so I'll close out this report later.

Well, not too bad a day. I expected to get nothing done in writing today so I was already ahead with what I wrote on a longer story (Going Back). Watched some football, taking some intentional time off, but also wound up writing another 419 words on a new short story (Needful Things). It's gonna be a good one, probably only around 3,000 words when it's finished. I also got the new website (this one, **http://HStanbrough.com**) set up and adjusted, a new header put up, then wrote this blog post.

So how did your writing day go? See you back here tomorrow.

Fiction words: 615 (on two projects)

Nonfiction words: 0

Blog: 856 words

Total: 1471 new words

October 20, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30, email, coffee, read Dean's blog, did some work on goal setting.

I still have the ongoing goal of writing a new short story every week and to continue working on a few longer stories as well, one or more of which will be novellas if not novels. However, I've decided to hold off thinking (intentionally) about writing a particular novel until I've at least gotten well into a six-week seminar I'm beginning (as a student, not an instructor) on November 5. So the goal to publish my first novel on January 1 is postponed, probably.

Thus far this morning (almost time to walk as I'm writing this first part of the blog) writing has been like pulling teeth for me. I think I'm concentrating (critical mind) too hard on wanting to write, if that makes any sense. I need to settle back, relax, and just let myself have fun telling a story. So for now, I'll let go of concentrating. Instead I'll focus (loosely) on not caring. Then we'll see what happens the rest of today, tomorrow, etc. As of right now, having spent over an hour staring at my writing computer, I've managed to squeeze out only a handful of words, maybe 200. <sigh>

Just realized I didn't post my walk last night. Yesterday I walked my usual "maintenance" distance of 5.3 miles. Since I started measuring such things, as of yesterday I'd walked 5,470,534 steps for a total of 2574.37 miles. Cool, eh? Just imagine if that had all been in a straight line. (grin)My plantar fasciitis is flaring today, so today I "power limped" (thanks, Dan) only 2 miles. I'll toss in totals for the day along with words at the end of this post.

Okay, earlier I said the goal of writing a novel is postponed probably. I had to qualify the postponement with "probably" because literally anything can happen. As I mentioned last weekend, I'm still retraining myself as well. Today I remembered something that lifted a huge weight off my shoulders and I thought it might help you too.

Remember "just write the next sentence"? Well, frankly, sometimes there IS no "next sentence," at least for me. When that happens, I just go to another scene (doesn't necessarily have to be chronological). This works as well for short stories as for longer ones, though it isn't as necessary as often in shorter fiction. To begin the new scene, write the first thing that occurs to you, and THEN just write the next sentence, write the next sentence, write the next sentence.

With any story, from a short story to a novel, it's perfectly all right to Just Write the Scene.

1. To begin a scene, write whatever comes.
2. To get through the scene, write the next sentence, then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence. Don't think about where it's all going or even about the second or third sentence: Just write the next sentence.
3. When you're writing a scene, don't worry about how it connects to other scenes. Just focus on that scene.
4. When the scene ends, write whatever comes for the next scene (or for another scene), then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence.
5. Your character(s) will lead you to where you need to be.

Can I, an accomplished poet and essayist and short story writer, easily write a very first novel just writing into the dark? No, not easily.

Can I write a scene? Yup. And that's just one more way to allow your subconscious to tell the story. If you just write the scene, if you just write the next sentence, your character(s) will lead you through the story to the end.

Today I have a new background on my computer screens:

Write the next scene.
Write the next sentence.
Keep the story moving forward.

Writers Write

And now (it's not quite 1:30 p.m.) I'm gonna turn right and see whether writing the next scene will enable me to Just Write Into the Dark for awhile. (grin) Back in a bit.

Okay, I guess that was the key I needed to start my engine. (grin) Off soon to watch my one serious indulgence, NYPD Blue. One of the best-written shows EVER.

This morning, all morning, I managed to tweak out about 200 new words of fiction. This afternoon, having been handed "write the next scene," I sat down and raced through 1853 publishable new words of fiction, so here are my totals for the day:

Fiction words: 2053

Nonfiction words: 0 (coming soon)

Blog words: 1238 (here and on my main site)

I'm not gonna bore you with my walking. I keep that on a spreadsheet. (grin)

See you in the morning.

October 21, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:15, took care of email, visited Dean's blog (not much there today for a rare change) and looked over a few nonfiction projects. I want to write or finish my short story for the week today so I don't let that deadline sneak up on me. (It posts automatically on Thursday at 9 a.m.)

For nonfiction projects, I want to write three new books: How to Create a Stunning Ebook Cover in an Hour, Writing the Character-Driven Short Story, and Creating & Employing the Persona. I'll set a deadline for each of them after I finish and post my short story for the week. I'll also create an audio lecture for each of the latter two. I almost want to get someone else to write them for me, y'know? I wanna write fiction. (grin) But I'll stop whining soon and get down to business, both literally with the nonfiction and figuratively with fiction for the day.

Writing nonfiction how-to books or scripts for audio lectures is a very different kind of writing. Whereas the smart fictionist will trust his subconscious to just write off into the dark, when writing nonfiction the writer must lay the critical mind across the keyboard and type right through it. Very stiff business, that. It isn't creation, but reporting. Still, it's somewhat enjoyable because the writer is sharing knowledge. (Unfortunately, many writers choose to share opinion and call it knowledge.) But it doesn't even come close the unbridled joy that's unleashed when the fictionist overcomes a stumbling block and realizes his fingers are flying over the keyboard at a thousand words per hour. I'm off to play now.

Wrote my short story for this week. "Jumper." Wrote it, created a cover, published it to Smashwords and Amazon and my fiction website between 5:30 and 10:30 a.m., so 5 hours. It will post on Thursday morning at 9 a.m. if you're subscribed to my fiction site at Harvey Stanbrough & Friends writing in public. Or if you want you can go there now and read it. When you get there just click the Writing in Public tab. Thus far 3870 new words of fiction plus one new cover. (grin) It's already been a great day for me for writing fiction. I didn't walk this morning so going to do that now, and then will get back to writing.

Knocked out 5.4 miles, checked the PO, shower, lunch, back to writing.

Got tied up with some emails, some free advice (I really should count words in emails (grin) but finally

wrote another 548 words on a longer story I've been working on for a few days. Probably will do more later, but for now it's NYPD Blue. (grin) Back in a bit.

Outstanding day for fiction. I started slow with 164 words on a (probable) short story for later; that hit in about 10 minutes, so that was all right. Then I wrote the 3870 new words of fiction in the short story "Jumper," then came back and added 548 new words to a longer story that needed some attention.

Thanks to those of you who shared your word count, writing schedule, goals, and successes with me earlier today. I'll get all that compiled soon. (grin) Remember, any time you feel like commenting below, please do so. Feel free to share your successes, whine when you miss your goals, etc. You can be sure I will. (grin)

Tomorrow is the third meeting day for my online workshop on Productivity with DWS. Looking SO forward to that.

New fiction on the day: 4582. Not too shabby for an old guy learning new tricks.

Nonfiction: 0

Blog: A little over 500.

October 22, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:23 this morning. Not sure why the specific time feels so relevant but it does. Maybe it's gonna be a great writing day. (grin)

Checked email first over coffee, then hit DWS blog. It was short again this morning but should be back to normal tomorrow (in case you've been thinking of checking it out and haven't yet). Thanks for your responses re my questions. I'll compile all of that before too long and send it to all of you to update you. WHEN I DO, please remember two things:

1. **All writers are different.** Each of you has his or her own challenges, and parts of what you've learned (or will learn on Oct 25) will be easier or more difficult for some of you.
2. **We are in this group to be supportive of each other,** not destructive. If you write only 50 words in an hour, should you feel bad? Why? That's 50 more words than you had an hour ago, right? So congratulations are in order. Seriously. AS YOU LEARN TO TRUST YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, your productivity will increase, so don't sweat the small stuff.

When I think of the term "negative energy," I'm reminded of the tank commander in the Clint Eastwood WWII movie, *Kelly's Heroes*. The actor was Donald Sutherland, he played the role as if the character was a peace-and-love hippie, and his favorite mantra was No Negative Energy. It was great, but in the back of my mind I always just marked it off as so much BS. I mean, that's fine if you're sitting around a campfire singing "Kumbaya" but it's of little or no value in the real world. At the time I was still firmly established in the mindset that positive thoughts do not a flak jacket make.

Well, that's true. Positive thoughts won't stop a bullet, but negative thoughts NEVER achieve positive results. Why did it take me so long to realize this? Maybe because I needed to attach it to something of importance in my own life. That "something" is writing. Since I learned how wonderful it is to let go of all those irrational fears and just write off into the dark, I've eschewed negative energy in all its forms as I recognize them.

So the upshot of all this is that you will NEVER hear from me a negative thought about your writing habits, your goals, your slips, or your writing itself. If I think I can help you improve your word count per hour or your schedule or your goal-setting, I certainly will try, but the attempt will never be derogatory or

otherwise destructive. I'll share with you what works for me, and if it works for you too, we're golden. (grin) I hope you also will share with all of us what works for you. Again, please use the Comment form at the bottom of this post.

By the way, there's a GREAT bundle of writing books at **Chuck Wendig's blog**. Seriously, go check it out. Click that specific link, and scroll down to see the book bundle. I bought it yesterday. Seven books for $20, and this guy is valid. He isn't passing along bogus information. While you're there, read the blog post itself: Five Ways to Respond to a Negative Review. It isn't what you think, and it's absolutely refreshing.

Okay, this is getting way too long so I'm gonna go listen to my workshop lessons now. I'll be back tonight with my word counts for the day.

After the workshop lessons I walked (about 8:30 to about 10) and then found myself inundated with emails (I don't mind) for the next two hours straight. So whatever writing I did was despite all of that. I'm just sayin', it ain't always calm around here either. (grin)

My goal is to write 3000 new words of fiction (about three hours) per day in addition to whatever nonfiction, emails, and other nonwriting tasks I have, but I think it's going to take a little getting used to. (grin) Great writing day yesterday and a really good day today, so I'm gettin' there. NYPD Blue is about to come on so I'm gonna post numbers now. See you in the morning.

Fiction: 1289 (8539 total since 10/19)

Nonfiction: 0

Blogs: other 1013, this one 706, so 1719 total (4313 since 10/19)

October 23, 2014[edit]

Up just before 3 a.m., coffee & email, then just screwed off for awhile with Spider Solitaire. If ever an evil game was invented for the specific purpose of wasting a writer's time, it's that one. (grin) Believe it or not, this is another part of my retraining. I've always been a Type AAA personality. If I had something to do, I wanted to do it NOW because in any given future there might not be enough time. So I'm learning it's all right to NOT write sometimes. Let me explain:

I used to smoke cigarettes. I quit four separate times. The one that took (the last one) was cold turkey. I decided I just wouldn't smoke anymore. Part of that process (leading up to quitting) was to make myself smoke a cigarette when I didn't have the urge. I was conscious of every step in the process. To smoke a cigarette, first of all I had to have a pack. Then I had to

- remove one from the pack
- position it between my lips
- find a fire source (lighter, match)
- ignite the fire source
- light the cigarette and inhale

If I removed any one of those events, I would not be able to smoke a cigarette.

For a week I practiced smoking when I didn't want to and not smoking when I did want to. It was a way of showing the habit I could control it if I wanted to instead of it controlling me. Then when I quit, I called on my stubborn streak. I mentally crossed my arms and refused to buy a pack. If I came across a cigarette, I refused to pick it up, etc. right on down the list. I didn't slip up. I didn't backslide. I haven't had a cigarette since then, and I can't even remember when I stopped smoking. (I also don't see myself as a

nonsmoker. I see myself as a recovering smoker.)

Retraining yourself is simply a matter of convincing your subconscious of who you really are.

Several years ago I convinced my subconscious that I was a person who lives a cigarette-free life. Today I'm convincing it I'm a professional fiction writer, that no other aspect of my life is more significant to who I am than my writing. Retraining. Rough but absolutely necessary. That's why setting and achieving goals is so important. Doing so shows your subconscious you're serious. Streaks are important for the same reason. More on that in tomorrow's post. (grin)

Spent most of my morning writing blog posts to play catch up over on my "big" site. Got done up through the end of November. I'll add more later and get them pre-posted so they won't bug me so much. So total blog words (not including this one) for the day = 1835 words. No fiction yet, but I'm out the door for a walk and will write fiction when I get back. Something to look forward to. (grin) It's the story that taught me (rudely) when "write the next sentence" doesn't work because there is no next sentence, just write the next scene. Currently I believe there's one scene left after I finish the current one, and then it will be (probably) the story for this week.

Finished the short story version of "Adobe Walls." Once I realized the relationship between Wes and McFadden, I realize I might have a MUCH longer work if I went back and started at the beginning. Without realizing it, I'd started very near the end. So anyway, it's up at HEStanbrough.com right now. Stop by and take a look. I've never written a western before.

Okay, here's the count:

New fiction: 1785

Nonfiction: 0

Blog(s): 2472

plus one new ebook cover (grin)

See you in the morning.

October 24, 2014[edit]

Rolled out this morning just before 2. Worked on email for 40 minutes before I realized I hadn't gotten my coffee. How'd that happen? (grin) Anyway, it's Friday. Shrug.

TGIF? Not around here. Not in my office. The weekend always brings Other Things To Do, things that generally interrupt my writing time, or more accurately, make it less available. Ugh.

I promised yesterday to talk about streaks and how important they are to retraining yourself, which means convincing your subconscious that you are, indeed, a writer. To establish a streak, do this:

1. set a goal that regularly re-sets itself
2. achieve it
3. lather, rinse, repeat

That's it. Seriously. Oh, and Don't Miss. Well, I guess that's covered in "achieve it."

A streak is great because it can be one large goal comprised of several smaller goals. For example, if you set a goal to write a short story every week for a year, your overall goal is to do just that—write 52 short stories in a year—but that's compounded by a series (52) smaller goals of writing a new short story every week. This is a great way to set goals because 1) it breaks the overall goal into manageable bites and 2) IF you happen to miss a week, so what? the goal re-sets the next day. And if you miss a week, at the end of the year you will still have written and published 51 short stories. (Plus, if you know anything about publishing, TEN collections of five stories each and FIVE collections of ten stories each. So that's a total of 66 publications in one year. And you can do each of the fifteen collections in both ebook and paper if you want.)

You know I have a streak going currently, and it's the one I just described. When I started that insanity back on April 16 my goal was to write at least one new short story per week for a year. Frankly, I've succeeded thus far ONLY because I hate the thought of having to say, "Yeah, I've written one brand spanking new, freshly minted short story per week except…." MailChimp sends out my stories every Thursday at 9 a.m. The closest I came to breaking my streak was on August 28. That Thursday morning I finished writing "Deadline" (ironic, eh?) and posted it at 8:30 a.m. Whew! Still, that's no way to live.

Streaks have power.

Streaks will drive you to the writing computer because the very nature of the streak demands that it remain unbroken. Streaks carry an automatic, recurring deadline because they're based on goals that re-set every day or every week or every month. When I meet the deadline and write a new short story this week, the goal automatically re-sets to the following Thursday.

And if you do miss one day or one week, does the world end? No. Will other writers point at you and laugh? Maybe, but probably not if they have their own streak going. And frankly, who cares? What's important is that a whole new streak will have begun. (grin)

Today is being a very good day for me. About 5:15 I was thinking today was going to be a non-writing day other than a few blog posts. On a lark, I decided to write for just 15 minutes. I turned right (to my writing 'puter), typed a line that turned out to be a title, and let my fingers run. Two hours later, I'd written 2393 new fiction words comprising a new short story: "This Is Not A Mosquito!"

When you think it's going to be a non-writing day, PLEASE recognize that as your critical mind stopping you from writing. PLEASE get in your writing chair and Just Write for 15 minutes. Who knows? Maybe it'll turn into an hour or two or three. "This Is Not A Mosquito!" will not be a story of the week because it happened too soon. New challenge doesn't re-set until next Thursday at 9 a.m., so I just published this one to Amazon and Smashwords. Of course, I'd be happy to share with any of you. Just let me know which eformat you prefer.

Fiction today: 2393 (Mosquito)

Since April 16 2014: 33 short stories; 83,220 new words of fiction; 47 new ebook covers

(In the last four days, Oct 21 – 24, 3 short stories, 13030 words) (grin) *MAN* I want it to keep going like that!

Blog(s): 997

See you in the early morn'….

October 25, 2014[edit]

Rolled out around 2:20. Teaching the final iteration of Writing Into the Dark today. Removed the Writing

Intensives tab from my website yesterday. Definitive actions are always good as benchmarks for turning points in a life. Next weekend I'll teach the final session of the current Pro-Level Writing Seminar Group, and that will be that. I hope we're all able to stay in touch, these folks in the Pro-Level Group and all these writers who made it to either session of Writing Into the Dark. I enjoy playing with my friends, and not all of them are fictional.

Now I can work on further revising my schedule. Already answer emails in the morning to help me wake up. Might set up a time in the early evening for another email session, and have it off the rest of the time. I want to keep having four-day periods like the one I just had, except with even more writing in them. (That was 3 stories and 3 covers in 4 days, with 13,000+ words. Woohoo!)

Earlier I'd written that I have no new goals at present, but actually I sprouted a new one this morning. Without planning anything, I found myself writing a novel this morning. ***I'm setting a goal to release (publish) this novel on or before Monday, December 8.*** I'll have a cover finished in the next few days, and I'll post it and a "place keeper" document to Smashwords and Amazon for pre-release sales. Of course, during that time I also have to write at least five short stories to hit my one-story-per-week goal. (grin)

And below is an overall to-do list that will become a list of new goals as I adjust to my newfound freedom as a writer:

Fiction:

- Continue (at least) one short story per week
- Learn/develop my technique for how to think of a novel (any ideas are welcome)
- Write six novels in the next calendar year (this is bordering on becoming an overall goal as well as a series of goals of writing a novel every two months, a certain number of words per day, etc.)
- Increase my hours per day/words per day writing fiction (I think this will come naturally with projects)

Nonfiction:

- How to Create a Stunning Ebook Cover in an Hour (ebook only)
- Creating & Employing the Persona (book & audio lecture)
- vastly revise and expand Self-Editing for Writers (ebook & audio lecture)
- Writing the Character-Driven Short Story (maybe, ebook & audio lecture)
- Making Your Living as a Freelance Copyeditor (maybe, ebook & book and audio lecture course)

Let's talk about the third one in the fiction list for a moment. This is a prime example of the old wisdom: Q: How do you eat an elephant? A: One bite at a time.

In other words, when you set a goal that seems overwhelming (like eating an elephant), you have to break it into smaller goals. The good news is, in so doing you're also setting yourself up for success because you're giving yourself the perfect opportunity to get a streak going. And as I mentioned yesterday, Streaks Have Power.

The idea of writing six novels in a year is overwhelming. So I break it down a bit. To achieve that goal, I could wait until December and write all six novels, but that's just nuts, right? Okay, so a natural opportunity for a streak pops up: I'll set a series of smaller goals of writing a new novel every two months. Still big, but a lot more doable than writing six novels in a year. Okay, but if writing a novel in "only" sixty days feels huge, we have to break it down again. How?

Well, if think in chapters (for example) and you already know approximately how long your chapters are

(say 10 pages) and how many chapters you'll put into a book (say 40), you can do it like that. In two months there are eight weeks. In eight weeks there are 40 weekdays. Write a chapter every day. At 250 words per page and 10 pages per chapter and 40 chapters, that's 100,000 words. If your novel is going to be about 60,000 words, adjust chapter length or number of chapters accordingly.

I would have to do it with word count instead. I already know I write about 1,000 publishable words per hour. I suspect my novel will be in the 60,000 word range. In the same two months (40 weekdays), that's easily doable if I just write 1500 words per day. One and one-half hours. If I hit my other goal of writing three hours a day (still only 5 days per week) that's 60,000 words in a month. So can I write a novel every two months? Um, yes, possibly while standing on my head spitting BBs. Oh, and I have to add another (roughly) 32,000 words in there for the eight short stories I have to write during that same eight weeks. (grin) Still well within reason. If I write 3 hours per day, in 40 weekdays I'll have 120,000 words… so 28,000 more than I need for my fiction. Maybe I can use the others for some of the nonfiction stuff I want to do. (grin)

Off to Dean's site, then writing, then teaching, then back here for word counts. See you in the morning.

Just back from the final edition of my seminar on Writing Into the Dark. Great group of writers. When I get around a group like that, I just feel fortunate. Thank you, folks, for being there today.

Fiction: 1490 words on a novel (!) (grin)

Blog(s): 1510

October 26, 2014[edit]

Wow. World Series time. Great game last night, at least up until 9 p.m. That combined with my tirednicity and my need for unwindingelasticity from the excellent group effort yesterday kept me up until 9 and added an hour to the other end of my sleep, so I didn't utter "Oh damn" and climb out until 3:45 this morning. Tsk tsk. Lazy.

Anyway, lazy or not, I'm here now, so on to the routine: emails, Dean's blog, and then turn right to write. I wrote the short story for this week (to post next Thursday) on last Thursday so I'll be working on my novel (or whatever else pops up). I wish you happy writing off into the dark. Back later with a topic and the word count stuff.

Just posted this on the comment section of the Productivity workshop I'm currently taking:

Ooh, another "just hadda share this" moment: The last short story I wrote for the weekly challenge was an historical western. No way did I ever expect to write a western though I've enjoyed reading them. Thing is, about 300 words from the end of this 6500 word story, the two main characters (just before the climax that led to the end) told me they'd been great friends several years earlier, how one had gone bad, why and how the protagonist had searched to find the bad guy ever since, etc. A smidgeon of that went into the story on the page. Most of it came as the two characters took a break from filming, cocked one elbow up on the cantina in my mind and chatted with me. In effect, for whatever reason, they told me all the major milestones that led up to the short story. So yesterday, without the slightest bit of fanfare or the nano-slightest bit of intent on my part, I started writing my first novel. When I realized what was going on about 1500 words later, I almost succumbed to "Oh Hell No". Instead I took a deep breath, remembered nobody would nuke my house if I failed or succeeded, and set a release date of 8 December (45 days). I'll create a cover in a day or two and a dummy document and set it for pre-release sales at both Amazon and Smashwords. Then all I have to do is actually finish writing the thing in time. (grin)

How's that for cementing a goal? Telling my unintentional mentor and all my co-workshoppers what a moron I am right out in public? Then again, that's what I'm doing here with you, my fellow co-

conspirators, pretty much every day. (grin)

Those of you who have written today to tell me what the class meant to you, thanks! Please PLEASE don't ever let "someday" become your mantra. Realize that every time you think *someday* that's your critical mind stopping you, postponing what you want to do, in its misguided efforts to protect you.

Topic for the Day: A Question

How many of you would be interested in posting your own daily (and maybe cumulative) word count as well as anything that might help others in the group, etc. to a blog, similar to what I'm doing here? If that's something that would interest you, and especially if it's something that you feel would help you keep writing, please let me know. I could set up another blog like this one with relative ease and open it up for everyone so you could post your own totals, projects, what motivates you, etc.

Day One of writing the novel: 1490

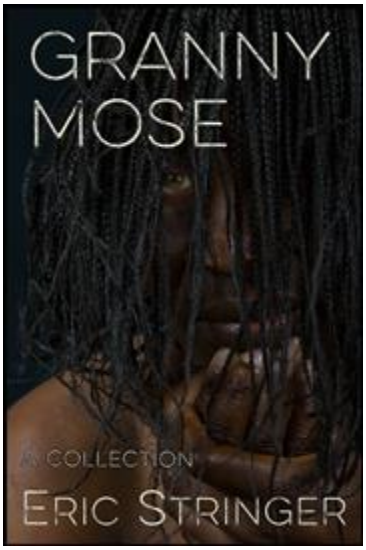
Day Two of writing the novel: 2152

Total so far: 3642 words (grin) (Not bad for two days of writing considering that I had not planned to write on Saturday or Sunday. Score!)

Overall Fiction for the Day: 3642

Blog: 620

October 27, 2014[edit]



This is one of the three covers I did today for the three collections I compiled and published. (grin) If you guys want one, just let me know. More on this later.

Well, an early morning. Probably my body making up for sleeping late yesterday. At least in part, I was in a hurry to get back to the story I'm currently writing. It probably won't always come along as quickly as I'd like, but it's coming along, and that's the whole thing, right? (grin)

Rolled out at 1:20 this morning (sag), went straight to email, then Dean's blog. Interesting things in both.

Okay, getting another cuppa, then turning right to play with Wes and Mac and my other friends for awhile. Back later.

Feelin' a little punky today, lack of sleep maybe (grin). First session lasted not quite an hour, added a turning point to the novel and wrote 842 words. I'll walk about 8:30 or so, and I suspect that will invigorate me and get me back to the writing 'puter afterward.

Yesterday I asked whether you would like a community blog on which everyone could post their numbers, notes about their experiences while writing, their current goals, and so on. One person (thus far) wrote back to say that would be a good idea, but a few others sent other notes via email that would be entirely appropriate for such a blog. So I'm gonna open up this blog to posts by everyone who has experienced the Writing Into the Dark technique. I sent out an email a little while ago detailing the process. Welcome aboard! (On the right there is the second cover I did today.)

If you have any doubts about whether to post something, please post it. I'll maintain overall editorial control, so I can be your safety net. (I won't look for misspellings, etc. I'll edit only in that I will disallow negative comments, things like that.)

Okay, so that's what we're gonna do. This is an excellent way to maintain our own little Writers' Support Group. (grin) Goodness knows with all the crap being passed around out there as allegedly good advice, we need a safe harbor we can duck into from time to time.

Had a great walk (7 miles on the nose) but decided I probably wasn't going to get anymore done on the novel today. However, I did compile and publish three new short story collections, all by Eric Stringer:

- Granny Mose: A Collection, five stories (12,000+ words), $3.99
- Deadline: A Collection, five stories (10,000+ words), $3.99
- This Is NOT A Mosquito! A Collection, ten stories (just under 23,000 words), $6.99

The ten-story collection (that's it over there on the left) contains all the stories that are in the two five-story collections. These will also be available as print books sometime in November when my first reader and print layout and cover design person can get to them. (grin)

By the way, I'm not pushing these here—in fact, if any of you want one, let me know which eformat you want and I'll send it to you free—I'm adding this to the blog post because it's what I accomplished instead of words. (grin)

Oh, Eric Stringer also sent me a new brief bio F-I-N-A-L-L-Y. If you want to see it, drop by http://hestanbrough.com/eric-stringer-2/. I think you'll get a kick out of it. (grin) However, I'm not responsible for damages caused by Eric, so if you have virginal ears, I recommend earmuffs or those really good headphones with a mic attached and have the mic connected straight to your local police department, you know, just in case.

Okay, so....

Day One of writing the novel: 1490

Day Two of writing the novel: 2152

Day Three of writing the novel: 842

Total so far: 4484 words

Blog(s): 585

Compiled and published three collections for Eric Stringer, created three new covers.

That's enough for today. See you in the morning!

October 28, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30, so back on schedule. (grin) Coffee and straight to the computer, but took care of some housekeeping before writing. Over at my fiction showcase site I'm showing ONLY my short stories now on the Amazon, Apple, B&N and Smashwords pages. I also renamed each of those pages a bit. I moved all the collections (eight right now, with several more coming later this week from Nick Porter) to the newly renamed Collections (Ebook & Paper). That's concise enough, eh? Also, the URLs attached to the covers on that page all point to the ebook on Amazon (my largest market) but when the paper book is ready it will show up on the same Amazon page as well.

So all of that and answering emails took up the first hour and a half of the day. Gonna check out Dean's blog now and then the workshop site to see whether there are any new comments. Oh, and I'll write today. I'll knock out at least my 2000 words-per-day goal. (grin)

One other note—several of you have accepted my offer to have your own account on this blog. Thanks! As I was telling one of you earlier today, a big part of the reason I opened the journal to you was to help each of you hold yourself accountable on your writing. Every one of you have shown, in one way or another, that you're invigorated about your writing. Some of that invigoration will flag (not being negative here, but just realistic), and when it does, letting the others know what's going on will help. Also, something you post on the journal might be just the spark another writer needs. So I hope those of you who aren't aboard yet will consider posting to the journal. You need only let me know.

Tip of the Day (from Dean's Blog): "Watch The Voice, watch the coaching, listen to the comments and with every comment think of your own writing. Polish is a dirty word in the entertainment arts. Unique is what sells."

Think I'm gonna get at least one of Nick's collections compiled today in addition to new writing in addition to my walk. (grin) Back later.

Okay, 2448 new words on the novel in two brief sessions. Then walked (only 4.6 miles that felt like 10 while being beaten with a cane), came back and got three collections and three covers put together for Nick Porter. Published all three as ebooks. Might go paper too, might not. Jerking myself around with that, and I'd really rather be writing than worrying about it. Hit the writing 'puter for another very short session and nailed down an extra 265 words. Hey, a quarter-hour is a quarter-hour and that's 265 words farther along than it was awhile ago. (grin)

Also heard from a LOT of you that you'll be blogging here soon too. Remember to click your name as Author on the drop-down list on the right just below the Publish button and select your category below that before you post. If you forget, you can do so after the fact, then click Update (same place the Publish button was before you published).

Tomorrow's a new day, thank Somebody. Today was rougher than the numbers show. Still, I'm glad they're there. Anyway, glad this one's over. See you in the morning.

Today's writing

Fiction words: 2713

Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 591
Ebook Covers: 3

Writing of *The Road to Adobe Walls*

Day 1.... 1,490 words. Total words to date.... 1,490 words
Day 2.... 2152 words. Total words to date.... 3642 words
Day 3.... 842 words. Total words to date.... 4484 words
Day 4.... 2713 words. Total words to date.... 7197 words

October 29, 2014[edit]

Rolled out excited at 2:25 this morning. Lot going on today, at least potentially.

1. My DWS online workshop on Productivity posts today, so I'll go to his blog first, then to the lessons.
2. The novel... I write in scenes and have been invigorated lately.
3. The next short story... I have a little breathing room since the story for this week (that will post tomorrow) is already written and ready to post, but I have to write another one for next Thursday.
4. Probably will put together two more collections today for Nick Porter, though they're only short ones.

Congrats to Dawn on her great new project. That's EXACTLY how to keep writing fun instead of allowing it to become a task!

Somehow forgot coffee through emails and this, so off to do that now and then DWS stuff. Back later.

I've bragged in the past about my little writing computer. For awhile the hard drive was on the verge of being full, yet all I had on it (I thought) was my word processing program, LibreWriter. It had become almost impossible to use it. I thought I might have to either format the hard drive (groan) or just find another writing 'puter. I kept poking around and finally realized the problem was my Dropbox account. It kept adding things to the hard drive. *(Yep, we believe the cloud is all in the cloud, only it ain't.)* But I found it, dumped all those files (only from my writing 'puter, not from Dropbox of course) and now the little 'puter has over half the hard drive left. Win! Cost me about an hour, but saved me at least a couple hundred dollars. And I *love* the keyboard on that little 'puter.

If you haven't considered doing so yet, I do recommend you set up a separate writing computer. You can get a good inexpensive writing computer almost anywhere nowadays (thrift shops, eBay, want ads, etc.). ALL YOU WANT on your writing computer is an operating system and your word-processing program. You'll want to remove games, the Internet, and anything else that might distract you from your writing. Yes, you can just turn that stuff off on your business computer when you're writing, but what good does that do? ***This is part of your retraining. When it comes time to write and you sit down at your dedicated writing 'puter, your brain will switch over to Have Fun mode*** and leave behind all the email, blog posts, publishing concerns and other business stuff and concentrate on Just Writing.

Remember, if you want to receive blog posts as they are posted, be sure to enter your email addy in the upper right corner of the website (The Journal at HStanbrough.com) and hit Subscribe. I'm gonna go do that right now, then check out Lynn's blog (which I recently saw she posted) and then turn to my reinvigorated writing 'puter. Talk with you after awhile.

Okay, 1313 words in two short sessions. Time for a short break, then back at it. Another short stint of 1260 words, all on the novel.

It dawns on me (ahem, partly because of some comments DWS made when I told him I'm writing my first novel and fully intend to publish it on December 8) that *maybe* I'm writing a novella or *maybe* I'm writing a novel or *maybe* I'm just writing a learning experience. (grin) The way I see it, any of those is a win. No matter how it turns out, it has been great fun, and it occurs to me that even the worst day spent writing is better than the best day spent doing anything else. (grin)

Okay, numbers for the day....

Today's writing

Fiction words: 2573
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 667
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of *The Road to Adobe Walls*

Day 1.... 1,490 words. Total words to date.... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date.... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date.... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date... 9770 words

almost to my first major milestone of 10,000 words

October 30, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:45 this morning. Bedroom clock was FLASHing FLASHing FLASHing, but I felt awake so padded into the kitchen with a flashlight to check the time, then back to get dressed. (grin)

Emails, then to check DWS blog and then to check for comments on yesterday's workshop sessions.

Something occurred to me as I was reading the comments on DWS blog from yesterday (today's wasn't up yet): Recently he's been writing about Following Your Passion. In that you can also read Be True to Your Passion. The point was, it's easy to sell out to what you believe the market wants or stop writing and focus on selling what you've already written or any number of other copouts. What's difficult in any art form (including writing) is to Follow Your Passion and remain true to your passion DESPITE what your family and friends (and critique group members) say, and DESPITE lagging sales, and even DESPITE your own critical voice. When writing becomes work, seriously, find something else to do. Not everyone is a writer. When it comes to following your passion (or the markets) and being true to your passion (or polishing all the good off of what you write), you have a choice to make:

1. You can BE a writer who also does other life things, OR
2. You can be a plumber or cop or housewife or lawyer or doctor who also happens to write sometimes.

Okay, all of this has taken an hour and a half and I'm like hyper-jonesing for some words, so to paraphrase Batman, To the writing 'puter! (grin)

Ah, minor panic attack. Just realized it's the 30th and for a second I wondered whether my main website had a blog post ready to go out. I checked, it did, piddled around over there for another 15 minutes and am jonesing hard again, so To the writing 'puter! Talk atcha later.

A good, solid first session of 1010 words and dawn is just starting to touch the sky. (grin) A little break and another 867 words. Another of 1070. Finally, 1477 in two short sessions. Great day writing. (Told you I was jonesing for words!) (grin)

Oh, I went back and checked Dean's site for his blog again. He has a GREAT blog post today about outlining after the fact. I strongly recommend checking it out. (grin)

Okay, numbers for the day....

Today's writing
Fiction words: 4424
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 470
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words

This morning I shot past 10,000 words like it was standing still. Woohoo! It's not a short story. Now I'm heading for my next major milestone: 30,000 words (grin)

October 31, 2014[edit]

Happy Hallowe'en if you're into that sort of thing. (grin)

Rolled out at 1:50 this morning. Emails, then commented on blog posts by members at HStanbrough.com. Also off to DWS blog and check for more comments on yesterday's workshop sessions. Great stuff on the DWS blog. You really should check it out.

Small topic: Keep Learning from Valid Sources. I hope everyone here will take a half-hour or so to browse the blog posts at DWS and at HStanbrough.com each day. At the former, go to http://deanwesleysmith.com and scroll down. For the latter, I recommend clicking the tabs (names) at the top to make sure you haven't missed anything. Most of the posts are short, and you never know when you might find an absolute gem. Also, if you aren't signed up for my "main" website blog posts, you're missing a free (and valid) education. In a world of misinformation about writing and advice from "experts" who have never written anything but their opinion, this sort of stuff is priceless. Go to http://harveystanbrough.com and sign up. In fact, everyone here should read the blog that posted yesterday there. (Click the Blog tab and scroll down to Why Do You Write?)

Bigger Topic: Negativity. You all know my take on critique groups. I don't listen to opinions from people who don't do what I do: write. Nor do I take legal advice from a plumber or advice on rebuilding an engine from a doctor. If anyone in a writing group or critique group tried to tell me how to "fix" a character or scene or line of dialogue or narrative in one of my stories, my first question would be "What goals have you set and achieved in your own writing?" In fact, ask each member of your critique group that question. Then ask Dean Wesley Smith. Ask Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Ask your favorite author. Ask me. Then you can make an informed decision regarding from whom you want to accept advice or lessons on writing.

Seriously, a woman in Prescott recently (and smugly) wrote in an email, when I offered her a free copy of

Punctuation for Writers, "Oh, I assure you, punctuation use is strictly subjective." Really? After verifying that she understood what "subjective" means, I emailed her back: "Fine. If that's true, try ending all your sentences with commas." She never emailed me back.

The point is, why would anyone want to listen to advice from people who haven't done what they're talking about, a LOT and SUCCESSFULLY? Twice in the past few days I've heard (what sounded to me like) horror stories about good writers having to fight to keep from listening to and absorbing the tripe that come out of some people's mouths. For just one example, if a woman has a LOT of years of experience as a SUCCESSFUL journalist, she probably is qualified to teach journalism or at least share her tricks, tips and secrets. However, those years as a journalist do NOT qualify her to teach short story writing or novel writing or writing dialogue or writing narrative in fiction.

Your time is the most precious commodity you have. Every time you listen to bad advice, every time some moron says something that you have to battle against mentally, every time someone fills you with doubt, that's lost time you can never get back. As my friend Denise Roessle in Green Valley says, "True 'dat."

Okay, it's Friday, so in addition to continuing on my novel or whatever it is, I have to remember my goal for the week has reset. Have to slip off the novel sometime this week to write a short story, then back to it. Odd how writing the novel has come to feel like a reward to me. After I've done other things I need to do (even other writing, sometimes) I am rewarded by being able to get back to writing my novel. (grin) I hope SO much that your writing feels that good to you! And please, PLEASE learn to ignore, immediately and out-of-hand, all that hot air constantly coming your way.

The inexperienced critiquer, meaning one who hasn't been extremely successful with his or her own writing, is doing nothing more than berating you with his or her own the critical voice. Think about that for a moment. If he can't quiet the critical voice in his own writing, and if you're striving to quiet your own critical voice, why in the world would you accept advice from HIS critical voice? Don't Listen!

I know, too much preaching to the choir. (grin) I'll stop soon, I promise. You guys either get it or you don't. I'm betting you do. Like yesterday, I'm jonesing for some words, so once again to the writing 'puter! Back later.

Okay, numbers for the day....

Today's writing
Fiction words: 2433
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 866
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words

November 1, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 1:37 this morning. Email, our Journal blog posts and comments, DWS blog and Productivity workshop comments, then here, then to my writing 'puter.

Topic: Heinlein's Rules

When I was letting all you guys in on Heinlein's Rules, I should have emphasized Rule 6 a little more. Just as a reminder, here they are again:

> You must write.
>
> You must finish what you write.
>
> You must not rewrite.
>
> You must publish (or submit).
>
> You must keep your work published (or keep it in the mail, submitted).
>
> If you try to follow these rules, you WILL fall off them at times.
>
> > That's okay, and it's perfectly normal.
> >
> > To succeed as a writer, once you realize you've fallen off the rules, you MUST get right back on them again.

Okay, that's it. Did you get that Rule 6 with its two addenda? Listen, seriously, if you find you have real trouble following these rules, I strongly recommend you visit **http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lecture-series/** and sign up for his **Lecture 1: Heinlein's Rules.** ***It costs $75, it's composed of 15 videos, and it will be the best investment you've ever made in your writing. I promise.*** (Don't cop out and say, "Well, I don't have *real* trouble following them so I don't need to do this." Just go do it. ***Tell you what. You go buy DWS's Heinlein's Rules and I'll give you the Harvey Stanbrough Audio Lecture of your choice, up to $80 worth.***)

One warning: During his lectures, Dean will tell you that Every Writer Is Different. It's his mantra. I suspect he developed it when he was dodging bullets at writers' conference all those years. It's a gentle way of saying, "Not everyone can be a professional writer. You ain't it." But don't let it fool you. Don't accept the opportunity to cop out. Elsewhere he also says he doesn't know a single professional writer who isn't following Heinlein's Rules. If you can handle the truth, that's the truth.

Now, when he says that or something similar to describe the difference (for example) between his writing process (sprinting) and Kris' writing process (slow and steady), he means it. But when he's saying something like "Following Heinlein's Rules works for me but every writer is different," he's giving you an easy way out if you aren't disciplined enough to enjoy making up stuff for a living.

All of you look to me as your writing instructor in one way or another. I guess I've done a fairly good job of getting everyone to at least work toward writing off into the dark instead of feeling you have to let your critical mind take over when you're trying to write your story. That's good. What I believe I have NOT done well for most of you is tie WITD into Heinlein's Rules.

Thing is, the technique Writing Into the Dark is an offshoot or result of Heinlein's Rules. Check it out. If there were specific rules for WITD they would read like this (annotated with an explanation to save space):

1. **Sit down at your writing computer and Just Write.** (Just Write: Don't think about what you want to write. Don't strive for a plot; the characters will bring it with them. Don't plan and

force the characters/story to conform to your plan. Don't do anything else. Just Write.)

2. **When you get stuck, Just Write the Next Sentence. Then Write the Next Sentence. Then Write the Next Sentence.** (When you get stuck, Just Write the Next Sentence: If there is no next sentence, if nothing comes [Don't Think!], that scene is probably finished. Just write the next scene. Open it by writing whatever comes into you mind, then write the next sentence. Lather, rinse, repeat.)
3. **Run your spell checker.** (Remember, this is done in critical mind. It's imperative that while you're doing this, you don't start reading even small snippets of the story and "fixing" it. Like one little drink for an alcoholic or one cigarette for me, it will lead you to a lifetime of rewriting and polishing instead of submitting and publishing.)
4. **Send to your first reader, then publish.** (If you have a first reader, when it comes back, fix whatever the first reader caught IF YOU AGREE. If you don't have a first reader, or if you don't have a good first reader, skip it and just publish.)
5. **Write the next story. Writers Write.** (Self-explanatory. Writers Write. Just Write.)

I apologize for the length of this post, but this is a hyper-important topic. To summarize, if you want to be a professional writer, you must follow Heinlein's Rules, period. If you try to follow the rules, you WILL fall off, but the professional writer just laughs at himself and gets back on. Writing into the dark is an offshoot of that, a natural result of Heinlein's Rules.

If while you were reading any of this you heard that little voice that started with "But," get back on Heinlein's Rules. There is no but.

Today, I get to teach some of the finest writers in the state of Arizona the final session in our Pro-Writers Seminar group. I'm both psyched and saddened. None of us is falling off the earth, so we'll be in touch, but still.

Okay, numbers for the day....

Today's writing
Fiction words: 2375 on new short story for the week: "Needful Things"
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 1005
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words

This wasn't actually a day of writing the novel since I chose not to write anymore today, but because of the overall timeline goal I've set, I chose to record this as "Day 8″ of the timeline. Next time I do this I might record actual writing days for the novel. (grin)

November 2, 2014[edit]

Hey folks. Trying to retrain myself to set my sleep hours. Ideally, I'll get 6 hours per night, but also ideally that will be from 8 to 2. I've been going to bed at 7 lately (just happened that way) but since I've been telling myself to sleep only 6 hours, I've been waking at 1. (Good to know it still works.) Last night I

watched *The Shootist* and then *The Last Hard Men* (first time I noticed Charleton Heston is a master at over-acting, not a good thing), so I didn't get to bed until 8:30. But I rolled out at 2:10, so close enough.

Other people, I suspect, can "just watch a movie" or whatever, but that just isn't me. Can I get lost in a well-written, well-acted scene? Yes. But even when I'm enjoying it, I have the sense I could be doing something productive, like writing. I have to push that feeling down, enjoy the film or whatever as much as possible, and look forward to getting back to writing. (grin)

Email, DWS blog, checked for comments on Productivity workshop, then new posts, comments on this site. Also have to add "Needful Things" to all my book pages at HEStanbrough.com this morning, but I'll do that a little later. Right now, writing time. (grin)

Topic: Length of Various Fiction Forms

Recently I've been asked more than once the length of the various forms of fiction. *Yawwwn. Stretch. Sigh.* Okay, this is one of those "wrapped around the wheel" things that's great for personal use if you don't obsess over it. The answer is, it depends on whom you ask.

For example, although some major magazines (*Asimov's* springs to mind) publish both novelettes and novellas, most definitions online consider those two terms interchangeable. But you asked me, so here's my take in a handy-dandy put-it-on-your-metal-filing-cabinet-under-a-magnet list.

Pssst! Seriously, if you still have a filing cabinet, especially one of the old metal ones, there's a new thing out: computers. Check into it. 'Course, you can't stick stuff to it with a magnet (don't try; you'll screw up your screen) but still. I'm just sayin'.

Note that every form on this list denotes a complete story, meaning by definition it has a setting, character(s), conflict(s) and resolution:

- 6 to 99 words — Flash Fiction ("For sale, baby shoes. Never worn.")
- 100 to 1,000 — Short Short Story (Short Short)
- 1,000 to 6,999 — Short Story
- 7,000 to 14,999 — Long Short Story (or Novelette)
- 15,000 to 29,999 — Novella
- 30,000 to 44,999 — Short Novel
- 45,000 to 80,000 — Novel
- 80,000 + is a Long Novel

Just in case you have it in mind to ask something like,

"Wull, what about the vignette there, moron? You left out the vignette. Whaddayou, stoopid or somethin'?"

"No, I ain't stoopid. Maybe *you're* stoopid an' yer projectin' all your stoopid on me. J'ever thinka that?"

Sorry, got carried away there. Actually, my omission of the vignette from the list was intentional. Also called a "slice of life," the vignette typically is fiction from a single POV, but it has no predetermined word range. It is defined by its lack of a resolution (and in some cases, its lack of a conflict that needs to be resolved). So there.

Again, these are just my definitions for my own use, submitted for your amusement. If I were publishing a magazine, probably these are the lengths I would use to determine which label to slap on which accepted submission. These are not things the writer should worry about before writing or during the process. Just

Write.

Football today, so I'm gonna take a sort of day off. (grin)

Okay, numbers for the day....

Today's writing
Fiction words: 1738
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 671
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
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Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words

November 3, 2014[edit]

Well, hit the sack early last night. Didn't walk or move around much otherwise, so was slothful and tired. As a result, up at 1:10 this morning. Will re-begin my sleep-hours goal today: bed at 8, up at 2. (grin) That's what's good about goals in or out of writing: if you don't hit one, it resets and you hit it next time.

Email, read and commented on new posts on this site, then checked for comments on Productivity workshop. I'll check DWS' blog later. He's changed his posting time. To the writing 'puter. (grin)

Today I realized what DWS means when he says "the average is what matters." I've given myself a goal of writing this novel by December 8. To break that into bite-sized chunks, I've given myself a more intimate goal of writing 2 hours (2,000 words) per day. Today is Day 10 of writing the novel. In that time, one day I wrote zero words. Other days (you can see below) I wrote less than my 2,000 word goal. (Doesn't matter; the goal resets every day.) On a few days, I exceeded my goal. As of today, Day 10, I've written 23,749 words. So ON AVERAGE I've exceeded my goal of 2,000 words per day. (grin) If it motivates you, it's a good thing.

I had a great day writing today. (grin) Here are the numbers....

Today's writing
Fiction words: 5114 (tossed out 1076)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 306
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words

Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words
Day 10... 4308 words. Total words to date..... 22673 words

November 4, 2014[edit]

To bed at 8, up 2. Score! Now to see whether I can keep to that schedule.

Email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal, then to Week 1 of the SF workshop with DWS. First week's lessons were (per expectations) mundane in nature. Yawn. Hope next week we're down in the brush, sweating, swatting sawflies (is that a thing?) and Gettin' Into It.

Writing on the novel in three short-ish sessions: 942 words, 970 words, 863 words.

Off to vote around 7:30, then to visit with the board of San Pedro Valley Arts & Historical Society (where we had our seminars) at 9:30. I think in January I get to be president of the Arts & Historical Society. My big "agenda" will be to encourage writers and writing in southeast Arizona.

Did all that, came back, visited DWS blog. Incredible incredible *incredible* how strongly and how much this one man motivates me. There's a new little snippet of pure gold almost every day in his blog. Today he was talking about his current goal of writing THREE novels per month of at least 40,000 words each. He says he told Kris, "If I do manage this month, doing about 120,000 to 130,000 words of fiction, I will be at what I call 'Pulp-One Speed.'" (Remember Warp-One in Star Trek?) After that he said, "I figure if I can get to Pulp-One Speed this month, then I can work up from there." He goes on to say "Pulp-One speed is very possible." Thing is, if it's possible for Dean, it's possible for us.

See why I say I feel like a slacker? (grin)

I'm still working my way into writing more every day, more hours in the chair. Eventually I'd like to put in 3 hours in the morning (3-6 a.m., 3000 words) then another two from 9 to noon, then another three in the afternoon, say between 1 and 5. No reason AT ALL why I shouldn't be able to do that on most days. But yes, I do have to work up to it. Right now when I hit around 4000 words, my brain gets fuzzy. My own goal right now is to write 3,000 words per day. (That's only three hours for me.)

My current goal is to discipline myself to write at least 2 hours between 2 and 6 a.m. (2000 words) and another 3 hours between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. That would be 5,000 words per day on most days, and that would be very good for me: 60,000 words every 12 days.

Anyway, another pretty good day writing (for me) today. Here are the numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3698
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 383
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls (gotta change this title)
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words

Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words
Day 10... 4308 words. Total words to date..... 22673 words
Day 11... 3698 words. Total words to date..... 26371 words

November 5, 2014[edit]

To bed at 8:20, up 2:20. Uncanny.

Email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal, then to check for comments on the two current DWS workshops, then to Week 1 of the Ideas workshop with DWS. (This is the third and last one I'm taking concurrently.) First week's lessons were (per expectations) very basic. Again looking forward to next week, getting down in the brush, sweating, swatting sawflies (I really like that word).

Revisited my post from yesterday on this blog mostly to see what I'd said about goals. What a mess. Put in a lot of stuff and meant to take some out, but didn't. The next paragraph is basically me thinking out loud, because writing it down helps cement it in my mind. So....

I had a goal of writing 2,000 words per day but I shot past that like it was stapled to a tree. Then, without giving it any real thought, I simply raised the goal to 3,000 words per day (3 hours' writing). Well, that's pretty easy so it isn't a suitable goal. I can do that pretty much any day, even today. (Today is turning out to be incredibly filled with "little things"—things that don't matter all that much but that consume a great deal of time and that I feel compelled to do—like revisiting this stuff. Ugh. Annoying. But I gotta get through it.

Okay, so I've set two goals per day. The key is, these goals are realistic, by which I mean 1) they are achievable, but 2) they will make me reach:

- **Goal 1: Write at least 2000 words (2 hours) between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.** (This is my Early Morning Goal, or EMG. This time span also includes email and other chores.)
- **Goal 2: Write 3,000 words (3 hours) between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.** (This is my Rest of the Day Goal, or RDG. This time of year, this time span also usually includes a walk, which is most often 2 – 2.5 hours.)

Okay, very slow start this morning. I think part of the problem is that I got up about 20 minutes later than I wanted to and that kind of threw off my rhythms. All of the above took well over 3 hours, extremely unusual for me. So I've already missed the Early Morning Goal (EMG) I just set. (grin) That's okay. The RDG begins at 9 a.m. (grin) For now I'm gonna cheat, jump over to the writing 'puter anyway and see what I can knock out in the next half-hour or so.

Okay, in three short sessions, 1509 words on the novel, but another story jumped into my head and I was compelled to write it as well. Not sure how short or long Marisa (working title) is going to be, but for now she's 2662 words. I'll add her below the novel count just for grins and giggles.

Anyway, not a great day of writing, but not bad either. Here are the numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4171 (1509 on novel, 2662 on new project)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 622
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls (gotta change this title)
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words
Day 10... 4308 words. Total words to date..... 22673 words
Day 11... 3698 words. Total words to date..... 26371 words
Day 12... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 27880 words

Bugs me that I'm including a non-writing day in this count. Next time I do this I probably will include only days I actually write.

Writing of Marisa (working title)
Day 1..... 2662 words. Total words to date..... 2662 words

November 6, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 1:40 a.m. Ahhh, that's better!

Email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal, then to check for comments on the three current DWS workshops. Very little there.

A Bit of Instruction

I am amazed. I've practiced WITD since mid-April, I follow DWS' blog posts semi-religiously, and I've successfully *taught* WITD, yet yesterday I hit a wall, hard, period, in the novel. "Write the next sentence" didn't work. I shifted gears to "write the next scene," but the next scene (ANY scene) just wasn't there. What? Are you kiddin' me?

This is completely new ground for me. No other ideas occurred to me, so I decided the novel needed to rest. The characters didn't argue. I opened a new document and wrote the opening line for Marisa (working title). I didn't stop for almost three hours. Went back to the Adobe Walls novel. Guess what? Nothing.

This morning, I practically flashed through my wake-up routine (emails, etc.), anxious to saddle up and resume the journey with Wes. So I turned to my writing 'puter and— Nothing. Okay, this is serious. I actually broke into a sweat. Physically.

Wes just resigned his commission as a Texas Ranger. Then he walked out the door and disappeared into the blank spot that is my mind. FINALLY, after almost a full day of fretting and wondering and worrying about why I couldn't "just write the next scene," it hit me full-face: I kept trying to write a scene that isn't part of the novel.

I had laid out a loose, overall outline, frankly to serve as a mental safety net. Yesterday and earlier this morning I was trying to follow that outline. My critical mind was masquerading as my creative mind.

This morning I leaned back in my writing chair, interlaced my fingers behind my head, and said (yes, aloud) "Where you goin', Wes?" And I swear, just like that, he looked down at me from the back of his horse and said, "Mexico."

Per the outline, I had wanted Wes to go to Santa Fe. I wanted him to decide he was through with law enforcement, then get pulled back in, look for Mac over the years while doing other tasks in law enforcement, blah blah blah. (Frankly, that sounds to me like a first-time novelist trying to hedge his bets and make sure the length is there.) But it isn't about what "I" (conscious critical mind, ego) want. It's all about the characters and what THEY want. Okay, so right here's where I wanted to write, Bam! Just like that I'm off and writing again! But I'm not. I decided to put up a couple more collections (my last two for now) and do some other things that needed to be done. Tomorrow morning I'll start fresh, lay my ears back and write my a… fingers off.

Anyway, just in case this thing sneaks up on you too, remember, writing off into the dark is fun specifically because it isn't about you, the writer. It isn't about forcing anything into a mold. It's all about the characters and what THEY want.

Okay, so again, not the best writing day today. I kind of expected it to be a poor day though, so it's okay. Today at 9 my story of the week posted over at HEStanbrough.com (it's free) so my weekly story goal reset. Tomorrow morning my EMG resets at 2 a.m. and my RDG resets at 9 a.m. Aren't recurring goals wonderful? Here are the numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1617 (849 on novel, 768 on Marisa)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 644
Ebook Covers: 2

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls (gotta change this title)
Day 1….. 1490 words. Total words to date….. 1490 words
Day 2….. 2152 words. Total words to date….. 3642 words
Day 3…….. 842 words. Total words to date….. 4484 words
Day 4….. 2713 words. Total words to date….. 7197 words
Day 5….. 2573 words. Total words to date….. 9770 words
Day 6….. 4424 words. Total words to date….. 14194 words
Day 7….. 2433 words. Total words to date….. 16627 words
Day 8…….. 0 words. Total words to date….. 16627 words
Day 9….. 1738 words. Total words to date….. 18365 words
Day 10… 4308 words. Total words to date….. 22673 words
Day 11… 3698 words. Total words to date….. 26371 words
Day 12… 1509 words. Total words to date….. 27880 words
Day 13….. 849 words. Total words to date….. 28729 words (on average, I'm still on track)

Writing of Marisa (working title)
Day 1….. 2662 words. Total words to date….. 2662 words
Day 2…… 768 words. Total words to date…… 3430 words

November 7, 2014[edit]

Hi Folks,

I'm posting twice today because this needs to be posted. This is like an emergency. I'll post my numbers later. For now, remember

ANY time ANY thought springs into your mind that you know you're going to have to edit, blah blah blah that's your fear talking through your critical mind. It happens to all of us.

The ONLY solution is to remind yourself to stay on (or get back on) Heinlein's Rules. Here

they are again, just as a refresher for my friends:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must NOT rewrite.
4. You must submit your work for publication or publish it yourself.
5. You must keep it in the mail until accepted for publication or keep it published.

As more of you are beginning to learn, one of the big traps is "former work," something you wrote or started writing before Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark came to your attention. It seems only right that you should go back and rewrite what you've already written so it matches what you're writing now.

NO! That is your fear of not being perfect fooling you through your conscious mind to stop you from writing.

This fear and its conscious-mind vehicle hit's ALL of us. It hits every serious writer out there. ALL of them. It will never fully go away, but that doesn't mean you have to succumb to it. Every time you hear that voice, tell it (aloud if necessary) to shut up and back off, and then go back to writing from your subconscious creative mind.

Trust Your Subconscious. You Will Not Regret It.

Seriously, we all slip, but the professional writer gets back on Heinlein's Rules immediately.

November 7, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:00 a.m. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal. Might have to adjust doing that and checking DWS stuff to later in the day when I can't be in creative mind for other reasons.

Realized this morning, the main reason I wanted Wes in the novel to be pulled back into law enforcement is because in the short story the other characters referred to him as a former Ranger but also as a former US marshal from Santa Fe. But that's all right. I already know the novel is going to be a different story than the short story. The end probably will be similar, but that's probably the only real similarity. I'm even thinking of changing this protagonist's name.

Back on track with Wes as he follows along behind Mac (about 8 months behind him). Sure feels good to be riding along with him again. Got very little done on Marisa today (just token numbers really, to keep the story moving forward in my head) but a good day riding along with Wes.

I usually write up to just before 5 p.m. but I'm calling it a little early today. My brain's toast, but I got a lot done (for me). Proofed a few paperback collections, answered roughly half a boatload of emails. Didn't get to walk so no oxygen pumping through the brain cells. (grin)

Have to admit, I was sorely tempted to hammer out another 302 words just so I could say I reached my daily goal of 5,000 words, but it just doesn't work that way. (grin) Besides, if it were that easy, I'd have to adjust my goal. Here are the numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4698 (4669 on novel, 259 on Marisa)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 723
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls (gotta change this title)
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words
Day 10... 4308 words. Total words to date..... 22673 words
Day 11... 3698 words. Total words to date..... 26371 words
Day 12... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 27880 words
Day 13..... 849 words. Total words to date..... 28729 words
Day 14... 4669 words. Total words to date..... 33398 words

Writing of Marisa (working title)
Day 1..... 2662 words. Total words to date..... 2662 words
Day 2..... 768 words. Total words to date..... 3430 words
Day 3..... 259 words. Total words to date..... 3689 words

November 8, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little after 2 a.m. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal. Received the proof files for seven new print collections from Create Space this morning. I'll hold off opening those or I'll use all my writing time to review proofs instead. I'll do that later this morning.

Walking Stuff—Putting this in just in case it might ring a bell with some of you. Been letting my exercise (walking) slide lately. A lot. I've been taking days off, and when I do walk I've been "in maintenance mode," my critical mind's excuse for not walking farther than 3 or 4 miles. Now it's perfectly all right that walking has been replaced by writing as my number one priority in life, but I have to keep up my walking (Plus, umm, it's Just Walking for goodness' sake!) or I won't get to write nearly as long. My wife reminded me that when I was walking well, I went every day at a set time (first light). Can't do that now because it's just too cold (this from a guy who spent several nights in a row in 50 below zero temps) but I can still set a specific time each day and Just Walk (like Just Write). So I'll figure that out today.

Back later. Right now I gotta go see what Wes wants to do today. I had last watch. Now it's time to wake him up so we can get on the trail again. Wrote awhile, then walked 6.4 miles (yay!). Back on track with that too, maybe.

Just a reminder: if you aren't checking in on DWS blog every day, I strongly recommend you do that. Today's DWS post (November 8) is all about writers worrying about killing their career, and thereby killing their career. It's really excellent. To read, click this link:
http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-7/

Here are the numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 5005 (3983 on novel, 522 on Marisa, 500 on Ink)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 492
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls (gotta change this title)

Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words
Day 10... 4308 words. Total words to date..... 22673 words
Day 11... 3698 words. Total words to date..... 26371 words
Day 12... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 27880 words
Day 13..... 849 words. Total words to date..... 28729 words
Day 14... 4669 words. Total words to date..... 33398 words
Day 15... 3983 words. Total words to date..... 37381 words
Turning for the home stretch on the novel. Don't know the end yet, but settling into the last big section. <grin>

Writing of Marisa (working title, this is probably gonna be a short story)
Day 1..... 2662 words. Total words to date..... 2662 words
Day 2..... 768 words. Total words to date..... 3430 words
Day 3..... 259 words. Total words to date..... 3689 words
Day 4..... 522 words. Total words to date..... 4211 words

November 9, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 a.m. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal. Received the proof files for one more new print collection (the last one for now) from Create Space this morning. Proofed it (since it was only one) and ordered copies of all the collections for the upcoming book fair in Green Valley on Saturday, December 6. Fifteen copies of each long collection and ten copies of each short collection. <grin> So when I go over there, I'll have 12 or 13 collections on my table for sale. AND A NOVEL! (grin)

Heinlein's Rules—You just can't do a favor for some people. I'm just such a moron.

I made the mistake of telling a would-be professional writer (I'll call him, her or it Pat, a good androgynous name) about Heinlein's Rules yesterday. I even took the time to write out the rules for Pat. According to Pat, in 40 years of writing, Pat has finished a few novels, all subsidy published, and nothing else. Pat emailed me back, smugly, "I've read at least a hundred books, magazine articles and websites on how to, and they all say something different. What I tell my novel-writing classes is that it's whatever works for them." Wow. My first thought was, *Really? Pat's teaching a novel-writing class? That's some serious chutzpah!* (I think chutzpah's the right word.) And my second thought was, *Wouldn't that be like the Shortest Novel-Writing Class in History?* I imagine the opening lecture would go like this:

"Hi there. I'm Pat. Welcome to my novel-writing class. Here, let me gather your checks. Sorry, no credit cards. Okay, everyone find a seat. You guys are just gonna *love* this! Everyone seated? Okay, ready? Write this down, seriously: ***In Novel Writing, Whatever Works For You Is Right.*** Got that? We good? Oh, and just as a bonus, 'cause really, I like ya'll, ***Punctuation Use Is Strictly Subjective.*** Next time some moron tells you to follow some dumb rules, you just tell 'em I said so, all right? Okay, that's it. Thanks for coming. Ya'll drive safe now."

Yeah, I know. Way too sardonic. But not really. It just bugs me that what might have been an otherwise serious writer could be sitting in Pat's class listening to Pat. Ugh. Anyway, this is my last tidbit about otherwise intelligent people who are so immersed in the myths that they refuse even to consider something as obvious and simple as Heinlein's Rules. Ignorance is bliss? I don't know, but it certainly

rules among the wannabes and camp followers attached to our profession.

Seriously, unless you know for a fact a writer is dead-serious about wanting to be a professional writer and is willing to put the hard work into ignoring all the crap and following Heinlein's Rules, I strongly recommend you don't even tell him or her about them. Just mark that writer off your list and mark it up as less competition.

Worked on a transition scene with Wes. And I mean worked. The innards of the scene were all strictly from creative mind, and that part flowed beautifully, but the first few short paragraphs were like pulling teeth—healthy, strongly rooted teeth—without Novocain and with another dentist running a drill in the background just for effect. Because those few paragraphs led from what had been to what was coming, certain things had to match. I did more cycling back in this one scene than I've done while writing the rest of the book. But it's done! Wes is on his way to Mexico, and I am SO going along for the party. <grin>

UPDATE: What I thought was a transition scene was the last scene in the book. I wrote two sentences past the end of the book. Wes resolved his problem in a way I didn't expect. He actually did it while I wasn't looking. Incredible! When I realized what had happened, I literally pushed away from the computer, leaned back and yelled, "I'm finished!" Wes is still on his way to Mexico, but I guess I don't get to go along on this trip.

Now to do my short story for this week, and then start my next novel. <grin>

Here are the numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3684 (2950 on novel, 734 on Marisa)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 895
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of The Road to Adobe Walls (gotta change this title)
Day 1..... 1490 words. Total words to date..... 1490 words
Day 2..... 2152 words. Total words to date..... 3642 words
Day 3..... 842 words. Total words to date..... 4484 words
Day 4..... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 7197 words
Day 5..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 9770 words
Day 6..... 4424 words. Total words to date..... 14194 words
Day 7..... 2433 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 8..... 0 words. Total words to date..... 16627 words
Day 9..... 1738 words. Total words to date..... 18365 words
Day 10... 4308 words. Total words to date..... 22673 words
Day 11... 3698 words. Total words to date..... 26371 words
Day 12... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 27880 words
Day 13..... 849 words. Total words to date..... 28729 words
Day 14... 4669 words. Total words to date..... 33398 words
Day 15... 3983 words. Total words to date..... 37381 words
Day 16... 2950 words. Total words to date..... 40,313 words (done)
I JUST WROTE PAST THE END OF THE BOOK BY TWO SENTENCES!

Writing of Marisa (working title)
Day 1..... 2662 words. Total words to date..... 2662 words
Day 2..... 768 words. Total words to date..... 3430 words
Day 3..... 259 words. Total words to date..... 3689 words
Day 4..... 522 words. Total words to date..... 4211 words

Day 5..... 734 words. Total words to date..... 4945 words

November 10, 2014[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 a.m. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal.

Just for grins, I ran the numbers for the still-to-be-renamed Road to Adobe Walls, which I finished yesterday. The final count was actually 40,312 and that was in 15 days of actual writing. That averages 2687 words per day, 18812 words per week, and 978,237 words per year. This is not as much as some write (even some in this group) but for me it's wonderful. And I'll continue reaching for my goal of writing 5,000 words per day. Today, however, will not be one of those days.

Today I finished my story of the week, a minor accomplishment as far as word count goes, and experienced a continuing battle with a woman in Prescott who is so firmly entrenched in the myths I'm amazed she can take air into her lungs without feeling she has to rebreathe it to be sure the plot is perfect. Anyway, I don't need all that crap, so I just blocked her from everything I do, period. Life is so much easier that way.

Most notably, more myths died quick, painless deaths with this accomplishment (completing my novel). But first, did I celebrate? Oh yes. I told You. Then I emailed DWS. Then I sent the manuscript to my first reader. Then I yelled woohoo. (grin) I learned SO much during this project. If it never sells a copy, it will still be more than worthwhile just as a learning experience.

So what writing myths died? Well,

- I did NOT suffer withdrawal symptoms, which I've heard some writers actually call "post partum depression" (seriously?) from having finished a novel (ODG, it's over! What now?);
- I did NOT feel completely exhausted, arm-across-the-forehead, being-carried-from-the-stage spent (James Brown) like I need to take a day or a week or a month off. (I felt only elation, actually, along with a touch of annoyance that my protagonist solved his problem without me and probably about 20,000 words before I expected him to);
- I did NOT feel like I "owe myself" anything in particular beyond the celebratory stomps laid out above; and best (and biggest) of all,
- I have absolutely NO desire to go back and re-read it, even for pleasure, much less for editing or rewriting or any of that. I'm following Heinlein's Rules, baby. (grin)

Finally, I woke up this morning thinking *Yikes!* *What if that was just the ending of Part I?* Well, it IS true that I had hoped to accompany the protagonist to Mexico, but

1. I've already spouted off to everyone I know that I'm finished and
2. I can party with my protag in Mexico just as easily in a second novel as I can by accompanying him across the border in the current story.
3. Plus, if I write a sequel, I'll have TWO novels out there instead of just one. Remember awhile back I said the best way to market your work is to write more stuff and put it out there?

So that's what I'm doing next: writing another story, another novel, another whatever. Just Writing. I think I've written all I will for today, having finished "Marisa." If you like thrillers, SF, horror and/or psychological suspense, check it out at **HEStanbrough.com**. I'd love to hear what you think.

By the way, as I finished writing this, I decided to share some of it (above) over on my main blog. It will go out earlier today than this one does, so if you see it twice, my apologies. (grin)

Here are my numbers for the day....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 778 (on Marisa)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 658
Ebook Covers: 1 (for Marisa)

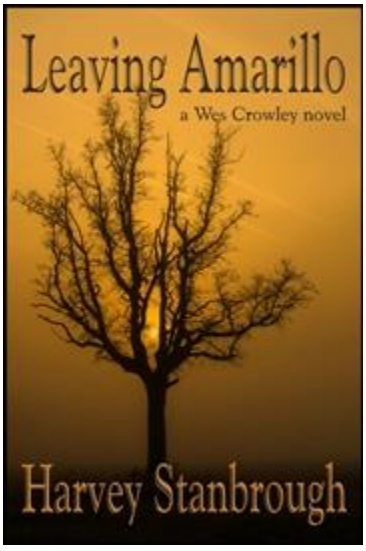
Writing of Marisa
Day 1..... 2662 words. Total words to date..... 2662 words
Day 2..... 768 words. Total words to date..... 3430 words
Day 3..... 259 words. Total words to date..... 3689 words
Day 4..... 522 words. Total words to date..... 4211 words
Day 5..... 734 words. Total words to date..... 4945 words
Day 6..... 778 words. Total words to date..... 5723 words
Marisa finished, story of the week.

I'll have a new project up tomorrow. Bet. (grin)

November 11, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little after 2 a.m. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal... well, off and on through the morning. The whole day was off and on. Ugh. Must be something in the air. You'll see why things were off and on for me in the next paragraph.

I started out excited because I knew today I'd have the 5th week of my Productivity workshop with DWS this morning PLUS the 2nd week of the SF workshop with him. As I was watching the videos in the Productivity workshop, I came to realize I was actually a week late. Dean had posted the Productivity Week 5 videos LAST Wednesday. I was so busy playing with Wes that I missed it. Could that have happened at a better time than during a workshop on productivity? I don't think so. (grin)



Anyway, this morning I got my novel, which is now called Leaving Amarillo, up on Smashwords and Amazon. For a bigger pic of the cover, **click here**. Then I prepped the manuscript and cover so DL could get them ready for CreateSpace.

When all of that was done, I attended the Productivity workshop and watched the vids for Week 5, then switched to the SF workshop and watched the vids for Week 2. Now, at last, I'm all caught up. Well, with workshops. Until tomorrow. Then I have Productivity Week 6 (the final one) and Ideas to Story Week 2.

But all of that stuff and some other piddling took up my normal writing time from 2 – 11, so I skipped walking today (eh, wind's blowing anyway) so I could write instead. I've recently realized when I go more than one day without writing (I didn't write much yesterday), I really get to jonesing for a fix. (grin) I see that as very much a Good Thing.

So today, I was trying to get back on task, hoping to turn out half a boatload of new fiction words—and I remembered I hadn't written the homework assignment for the SF workshop. *Oh man. It'll work out. His assignments aren't all that long 'cause he doesn't wanna read a bunch of brain-dead drivel from neo-novelists.*

Okay, the assignment was to write an opening scene using all five senses in fewer than 500 words. No problem. The character had to be either Jim or Judy. *Ugh. Parameter.* The scene had to take place on a spaceship. *Oof. Another parameter.* The problem had to be a stuck door or hatch. *Oof. A final body blow.*

That one nearly brought me to my knees.

For the past few glorious months I've been writing into the dark. I literally sit down, put my fingers on the keyboard, and type whatever comes. Dealing with those specific parameters jerked me straight into my conscious, critical mind. I hated every minute of it. It took me almost TWO HOURS to scrape out 424 words. Not 1424, which would be a lot closer to my norm for that length of time, but 424. I can only hope Dean's purpose will become clear. Grrrrr….

Had the assignment been to write an opening scene of no more than 500 words in a science fiction setting with a single character and use all five senses, no problem. But those parameters almost killed me. Ugh.

Okay, any hope of any real writing is over, done, kaput, shot. I'm gonna go brush my teeth to get that nasty, critical-mind taste out of my mouth, and then I'm gonna gear up to watch *NYPD Blue*, eat an early supper, and cha-hill for awhile.

I am soooooooo looking forward to tomorrow. Tomorrow I will write. I will walk. I will write some more. The only downside to tomorrow is that the word evokes a memory of some tinny-voiced little girl yammering about it. Another ugh.

For what they are, here are the numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 424 on SF workshop assignment (no seriously, that's it)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 646
Ebook Covers: 1 (yay! for Leaving Amarillo)

Writing of Sequel to the First Novel <ahem> NOT STARTED YET
Day 1….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words

November 12, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at shortly after 2. Email, responded to some other things here and elsewhere.

Taking a day off today (again). Gonna spend the day in critical mind, reading, listening, studying, learning, researching a bit, adjusting and/or setting challenges and goals for myself. So no numbers to report for today. Just gonna take care of some of the business-end stuff I've been avoiding or ignoring and then get back to the fun stuff later today or tomorrow.

In the meantime, here's a gift from DWS to me (and now to you). It isn't his personal property so I don't think he'd mind me sharing it. this is a video on YouTube and it's about 20 minutes long. You might even want to take notes. Enjoy.

Keep writing, and keep having fun!

Harvey

November 13, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little after 1 this morning. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal, checked out DWS stuff, workshops and his blog. Sent an email to all concerning his blog. Good stuff there. All of that and some other stuff took a couple hours, so to the writing computer now.

Most recent short story will go out via MailChimp today. Looking forward to hearing reader reactions to that one. Saying it's a little odd is like saying if you stand in the path of a tidal wave, you might experience "a little moisture." And the story-a-week challenge resets this morning at 9 a.m. (grin)

I hope to teach a new, more tightly focused daylong seminar that will also serve as a refresher for those of you who need it. I'm planning this for late January. It will be in Benson. The subtopics of that seminar (thus far) will be

- Heinlein's Rules
- WITD
- Increasing Productivity
- Cycling… What it is, how to do it.
- Writing Scenes
- Writing Setting

You've all had the first two and we touched on the third one. If you choose to attend this seminar, it will cost you half what it costs "new" students. Please spread the word to those whom you know are serious about becoming professional writers or even serious about being part-time writers.

Here are my numbers…. I expect to report higher numbers tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4856
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 357
Ebook Covers: 0

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1….. 2249 words. Total words to date….. 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2….. 4856 words. Total words to date….. 7105 words

Yes, there will be a sequel (maybe several) to Leaving Amarillo, but not right now. By the way, anyone who told you westerns don't sell was full of it. I didn't have an official launch, and Leaving Amarillo already has sold a few dozen paper copies (and it isn't even available on paper in Amazon yet) and forty-some ebooks. Think I'm not gonna worry too much about that one. (grin)

So……..
Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo NOT STARTED YET
Day 1….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words

November 14, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little after 2 this morning. Checked email, read and commented on new posts for The Journal, checked out DWS stuff, workshops and his blog.

I looked at some notes I took from a DWS lecture (Starting and Restarting, I recommend it) and the first thing I saw was "Some writers are sprint writers. Write voraciously for a period of time, then drop away for a day or two." Pretty sure that's me. However, I WANT to write. I want to get back to the pure joy of writing, so going to try to return to that today.

Due to several distractions, didn't work out as well as I wanted. Hope to get back to full strength tomorrow.

Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1205
Nonfiction words: 725 (article for The Write Word, SSA)
Blog(s): 180

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words

November 15, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Gonna be a great day despite the first couple of paragraphs below.

Spent the first hour of my day unproductively reading email slanders about Heinlein, denials that his "business habits" even exist, and that it's possible to misinterpret "you must write." One guy said he "interpreted" that to mean "you are compelled to write." Okay, whatever. That doesn't even make sense in the context of the essay in which Heinlein embedded his "business habits" OR in the context of the other rules, but whatever you need to tell yourself, y'know?

But those were all things from outside our group, and frankly, it's precisely what I deserved for telling others about this wonderfully simple set of rules that are so excruciatingly difficult to follow. I emailed those folks back because I'm stupid enough to think they'll even bother to read the emails. Why do I waste my time writing such unproductive sludge as emails to people whom I know in advance won't even offer me the modicum of respect it takes to simply listen? Ugh.

Well, all of that changes today. I'm setting a NEW challenge for myself. My goal from this point forward is to not tell anyone about Heinlein's Rules or Writing Into the Dark unless they come to a seminar, hungry to learn. And if someone does hear me say something about it and starts telling me it's all BS, that you must rewrite and polish and that fast writing produces crap (etc. etc. etc.) my goal is to smile and nod and say something like this:

"Hey, I'm *SO* glad you saw through all that stuff, really and truly I am. Wanna read my new novel? Man, it was like giving birth to an eighty pound child. *God* how I labored over this thing! Took me six years to write it. I was trying to keep count of my words per hour, but I finally realized that was impossible since it takes me a good eight hours to get a clean, polished 500 words, and sometimes I don't get that many. Well, my writing is just SO earth-shakingly important that it simply MUST take several hours to get it just right, you know. And rewrites? Did you mention rewrites? *OHMYGOD* I did *eighteen* rewrites! I'm *SO* glad it's over! What a terrible *travail* it was! Oh, I wish there were *some* way to release myself from this terrible burden of having to write! (Er, I'm compelled, you know. It's something I simply *must* do. Heinlein himself said so.) But boy, all the terrible hard work was simply worth every second. My novel's polished like you wouldn't believe! So, y'wanna buy it or what?" (grin)

Of course, the truth is it took about 40 hours to write my first novel, and that 40 hours was spread over 15 days. That's less than 3 hours per day. Terrible drudgery.

Topic of the Day: I'm floored, frankly, that so many within our group are having trouble with the concept of letting go of fears, trusting the subconscious mind to tell the stories that reside there, and just writing off into the dark. I suspect most of you don't read this blog, so I just sent out an email about that to all of you. Okay, email sent and now two hours are gone (see the nonfiction word count below). I'm gonna write now. I wish you all the same.

Got a full story done today (story, cover, posted, published) plus a little more on "Going Back." Not a bad day given that I always plan to get nothing done on Saturday and Sunday. Back at it early tomorrow. Gonna try to ignore everything else and Just Write in the morning from 2 to 6-ish. We'll see. Anyone else still working out your schedule to see what works best on given days?

Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3662 (2995 on "Rabbits & Wild Dogs," story of the week)
Nonfiction words: 2008 (emails to two others about Heinlein's Rules and the one to all of you)
Blog(s): 734

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 667 words. Total words to date..... 8977 words

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo NOT STARTED YET
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

November 16, 2014[edit]

Rolled out late at 2:30. Feels like a day off. Reviewing some DWS stuff (blog posts, lectures, workshops) and reading a bit on craft and some for pleasure.

Gathered most of my stock for the book fair in Green Valley on Saturday, December 6. (Should have one more collection and my novel tomorrow.) Why am I getting ready so early? 'Cause then I won't have to worry about it later. I was surprised at how much I'll be taking over there: 2 nonfiction books, 1 poetry collection, 13 short fiction collections, and a novel. Should be a fun day with some old friends I haven't seen for awhile. I also get to see my friend Duke again.

Also started setting up separate but static websites for Nick Porter, Eric Stringer, and Gervasio Arrancado. Just a place where readers can go to see only those guys' works. It'll take awhile to set those up, but only because I enjoy it and I'm taking my time. I think I'm gonna make 'em all look different from each other and from my sites.

Tip of the Day: Just in case you hadn't considered this... When you're describing the setting, describe only what matters to the story. How? Get inside your POV character's head and focus down on part of the setting that interests or otherwise matters to him/her. If you and your character and I and three other people walk into a room, each of us will see, hear, smell, taste and feel different things about the room (the setting). What's important in your story is not how You, the Writer, see and sense the setting but how the POV character senses the setting.

No numbers to report today. It felt enough like a day off that I decided to force it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 0
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 357

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words

Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo NOT STARTED YET
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

November 17, 2014[edit]

Up before 2, email, journal entries, DWS stuff.

Looking forward to DWS workshops tomorrow and Wednesday.

Writing by 3. Four short sessions on Wes2, sequel to Leaving Amarillo. Mostly introductory/transitory stuff, lot of head work. I want each novel to stand on its own, so had to bring pertinent characters and situations forward from LA to catch up readers who begin with book 2 but not so much as to give away the first novel. Odd combination... creative mind writing what critical mind selected and brought forward. 2144 words. Think this part is over (yay!) so I can get back to just writing off into the dark, probably in the morning about 2 a.m.

Lot of nonwriting stuff today as well, including a dead fox alongside Sibyl Road during my walk. Looked to me like a red fox, but I'm no expert. Despite having heard they're out here, sadly that's the first one I've ever seen in the desert. I'm not that guy who can just leave it lay there, so I moved it down the road to a wash so it can go back to nature. Unfortunately there are humans out there who will actually swerve to kill (or run over already dead) "lesser" creatures. Makes me wonder who truly is the lesser creature. Anyway, I've always trusted when I'm doing something right for the Wholeness (in this case, respecting a fellow creature enough to move its body into the wash), within that symbiosis, neither will the Wholeness allow harm (disease, etc.) to come to me as a result of that act.

No need to comment. Just musing aloud, I guess.

Tip of the Day: Want to involve the reader more in your scenes? (The answer is, *Why yes, yes I do!*) Try adding the five senses to every scene. Remember to Focus Down when describing what the POV character sees, hears, tastes, smells and feels. This is part and parcel of yesterday's tip. Remember, it's what the POV character, not You, see, hear, taste, smell and feel.

Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2144
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 388

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words

November 18, 2014[edit]

Up right at 2, email, journal entries, DWS stuff. The password for week 3 of the SF workshop wasn't there early, so I worked (okay, reworked) the opening of Wes 2, as I've temporarily named the sequel file to Leaving Amarillo. Between 2:30 and 5 in three short sessions I hammered out (pretty much literally) about 2000 new words. But again, a lot of that was reworking what I'd done yesterday. Not even close to as much fun as writing off into the dark, but necessary. So I got all the necessary stuff done.

Wes 2 is a sequel, but I also want it to be a stand-alone novel. As some of you know, that requires bringing some details from the first novel into the second. The trick is to give the reader enough so he's up to date with where the current story is beginning, but to do that without giving away too much of the previous story. (grin) Also, no flat-out info dumps are allowed. They're just nasty and they'll grind your story to a painful, screeching, ugly halt.

By 5 the workshop password was available so I attended the workshop, learned a lot of new stuff I hadn't even considered before. Exciting and enjoyable, a two-fer.

Afterward, I wrote a bit more in a short session, walked (almost 8 miles, very good walk), stopped off for snail mail, back to shower and more writing. Good day, considering it started with fine-tuning what to bring forward from one novel to the next, how to frame it, what to leave out, etc. I think Leaving Amarillo is pretty good, but I think the second one is going to be better. Goals, right?

Also did a little bit more on "Going Back" I really like this story, though I have not a clue where it's going. So I check in from time to time to see whether it's ready to write itself. Today, it took a new direction. Woohoo! Hope to be off and running on both tomorrow. (Tomorrow I hope to have what I've come to think of as a Dawn Turner Day.) (grin)

Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4342 (about 2000 not included below)
Nonfiction words: 1580 (big emails to three folks)
Blog(s): 564

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Writing of Wes 2, Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 8..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 10... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 11... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 13... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 14... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
Day 15... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words <ahem... goals>

The first one took 15 days, so who knows? This isn't a goal, but just something to keep me motivated. (grin)

November 19, 2014[edit]

Rolled out late, email, journal entries, DWS stuff. The password for week 3 of the Ideas workshop wasn't there early, so I went to work on Wes 2 and "Going Back." Kind'a would like to finish the latter so I can spend more time on the former, but still not the foggiest notion how long "Going Back" is going to be. Very odd but a good feeling. No reworking anything today. Plan not to walk today, plan not to leave my chair but for minor breaks now and then. Otherwise just writing off into the dark. Note: Ended up walking anyway.

Attended the Ideas workshop, picked up the main reason for which I bought it. Invaluable stuff. Had to run to the store, then snail mail, back for more writing. Very short session. House heater on the blink, more distractions. Everything fixed, went for a short walk at 2. Knocked out 5 miles, back to write a bit. No more writing on Wes 2 but did find a friend for him from the first novel who needs a LOT more face time. He'll get it in Wes 2. Stay tuned.

By the way, thanks for all the support. I hope I'm being at least as supportive of you as you are of me. Kicking off early today, to return around deuce a.m. mañana.

Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1540 (314 on SF workshop assignment)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 456

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date….. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date….. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date….. 4942 words
<*creeping along, but it'll bust loose soon*>
Day 4….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 5….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 6….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 7….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 8….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 9….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 10.. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 11.. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 12.. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 13.. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 14.. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
Day 15.. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words <ahem… goals>

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1….. 2249 words. Total words to date….. 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2….. 4856 words. Total words to date….. 7105 words
Day 3….. 1205 words. Total words to date….. 8310 words
Day 4……. 770 words. Total words to date….. 9080 words
Day 5….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it…

November 20, 2014[edit]

Rolled out late again (maybe my body clock is adjusting yet again… I hope not), email, journal entries, DWS stuff.

Plan to get a lot done on Wes 2 and maybe on that "Going Back" story. We'll see. I also have to start at least thinking about my next short story of the week. The most recent posted this morning at 9 a.m., so that goal re-set. If you guys like crazy, nutso Mafia-type stuff, check out the story at http://hestanbrough.com/writing-in-public/.

Topic for the Day: Exclusivity vs. a free market

Dawn mentioned using the delayed-publication (aka delayed-release or pre-order) feature in Amazon. She's right. It's a good tool and it's a good idea to use it if you need it. But she didn't mention doing the same thing with Smashwords.

I hope when you publish your work you don't fall victim to Amazon's KDP Select nonsense. They publish your book and give you a host of "marketing" options but you have to publish ONLY through them. That exclusivity is never a good idea. Plus a lot fo those marketing options they offer aren't available until you've garnered a certain number of reviews for your book (story, novel, whatever).

Amazon is just a venue folks. It's one store, albeit one with outlets in 40 or so nations. It's my largest-selling venue by far, but it isn't the only venue.

Smashwords is a venue as well, but unlike Amazon it's also a DISTRIBUTOR. If you go exclusively with Amazon, you will automatically cut off readers who prefer reading on Apple or Nook or Sony reading devices. You will automatically shun readers who prefer to buy from Apple, B&N, Kobo (all that's left of Borders), and several other major sales venues, as well as a host of smaller sub-venues. For a more complete list, download my free Quick Guide to Self-Publishing.

I admire Amazon and all they've accomplished, but I recommend strongly against shunning vast numbers of readers just so you can give Amazon the exclusive right to make money on your books.

Pretty good day today. Back tomorrow around 2 a.m.

Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4775
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 475

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date….. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date….. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date….. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4775 words. Total words to date….. 9717 words
Not quite busting loose yet, but on the verge!

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1….. 2249 words. Total words to date….. 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2….. 4856 words. Total words to date….. 7105 words
Day 3….. 1205 words. Total words to date….. 8310 words
Day 4……. 770 words. Total words to date….. 9080 words

Day 5….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it…

November 21, 2014[edit]

Right on time. Up at 2 a.m., off to email, journal entries, DWS stuff. Took care of a couple other blog posts as well. When ideas hit, I write them up, post them, schedule them and move on.

By the way, in Dean's post today, he wrote "I think celebrating finishing [a writing project] is a very, very, very bad message to send to your subconscious. You are telling your brain it is better to not be writing, to be finished, than to be writing." I recommend reading the whole thing. You can find it here: http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-20/

Got a lot more done on Wes 2 than is reflected in the numbers. Nothing more on "Going Back" today. Not gonna rush it. Wes 2 is my main focus right now, plus (of course) the story of the week. Nothing done on that today either.

Topic for the Day: Stopping and Starting

This is an ongoing problem for any writer. It's SO easy to allow yourself "time off" from your writing. If you feel like saying something like "I think I'm just gonna take some time off," check in with yourself: which fear is requiring you to want "time off" from writing? When you identify it, push it down and get started again. Just put your fingers on the keyboard and write what comes. Smile. Enjoy it. Have fun!

If your immediate mental response to this began with "But," again, check in with yourself. Identify the fear. Laugh at it, push it down and write.

If you're in the midst of a work in progress (WIP), same thing. Read a bit (a paragraph or two or three) to remind yourself of the storyline, then put your fingers on the keyboard and write what comes.

If nothing comes, chances are you need to begin a whole new scene. Don't worry about chronology. Just Write.

Just so you know, I'm not talking from on high here. This happens to me regularly. Especially while writing Wes 2 I find myself suddenly feeling overwhelmed. I know it's going to be a novel, so I sometimes slip into the notion that I have to "eat the elephant." I look at it as a 40,000-word plus novel. When that happens, I have to take a breath and remind myself (as I try to remind you) to Just Write the Next Scene, the next sentence, etc. You still eat the elephant, but one bite at a time.

You might notice I revised my word count for yesterday. I had included in that count an extra 200 words that I'd copied and pasted from the first novel to the end of this one strictly for reference. The Day 4 numbers below accurately reflect the word count minus those 200 words.

Not as good a day today as I'd have liked but a lot of things in the way today. Still about 1500 more fiction words than I had yesterday. Good enough. Back tomorrow around 2 a.m.

Okay, here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1502
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 1885

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it...

November 22, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little early this morning around 1:15. Took care of the usual email, journal entries and DWS stuff. By 2 a.m. I was riding south with Wes, who has a new sort of determined look in his eyes.

Worked out a few details and wrote new stuff for about an hour, then added more to a blog post I wrote yesterday for my main site. Had a lot of fun with that one. It's titled "A New Baker's Dozen: Thirteen Traits of a Wannabe Writer (No, this is humor... really.)" It starts with those thirteen traits and then ends with several more under the subheading of "You might be a wannabe writer if...." (That's a special nod to Jeff Foxworthy.) (grin)

Topic for the Day: Critical Mind

I mentioned yesterday that I had gotten a lot more done on Wes 2 than was reflected in the day's numbers. That's because yesterday I had a battle with my conscious, critical mind. I'm tellin' you, folks, you have to keep one ear attuned for the critical mind pretty much all the time. Don't listen to it; listen FOR it. There's a difference.

Way back before I even started writing Wes 2 (so, a week ago *grin*), I had an idea of where I wanted Wes to go and what I wanted him to do. I wasn't sure what situations were going to lead him to that place, but I really wanted him to be there. <<<Note: Me trying to impose what "I want" on the character is strictly a function of critical mind.>>>

I had hammered away for four days (I'm SO glad it wasn't longer) on the story before I finally paid attention to a quiet but nagging little voice in the back of my mind (creative voice) that kept saying, "Nope. This isn't right. It's moving too fast. You're forcing him to do things he isn't ready to do," and so on. And as it always is, that little voice was right.

So I decided to go back to almost the beginning of this story and throw out a lot of it. No biggie. The words aren't "wasted." If I hadn't written them, I wouldn't have come to this understanding, this place. Remember, words are nothing special and they certainly aren't gold or platinum. They're just words, just tools you use to tell a story. That's all.

As it turned out, I didn't have to throw out as much as I'd thought I might.

Now Wes is much happier, a friend of his from El Paso is much happier, an odd little keeper of the cantina in a small town in Mexico is in better spirits, and the story that Wes wanted to tell is moving along nicely.

So that's the lesson for the day. TRUST YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS. Train yourself to listen for that quiet

little voice that's telling you something's not quite right, and then fix it. How do you know that isn't your critical voice trying to horn in? Easy.

The subconscious, creative mind creates; the conscious, critical mind destroys. Remember that.

A bit under the weather today. 1428 words in two short sessions. Watched a movie on TV and then back for two more short sessions for 1557 more words. Not as good a day as I'd have liked but a lot better than nothing. Wes 2 feels back on track now. Back tomorrow around 2 a.m.

Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2985
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 1100

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date……. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4575 words. Total words to date……. 9517 words (revised)
Day 5….. 1502 words. Total words to date….. 11019 words
Day 6….. 2985 words. Total words to date….. 14004 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1….. 2249 words. Total words to date….. 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2….. 4856 words. Total words to date….. 7105 words
Day 3….. 1205 words. Total words to date….. 8310 words
Day 4……. 770 words. Total words to date….. 9080 words
Day 5….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it…

November 23, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little late, but still also a little under the weather. Allergies I think. Sinuses, nausea, etc. Took care of the usual email, journal entries and DWS stuff. By 3 a.m. I was spending time with Wes again. He's thrown yet another twist into the story.

Worked out a few more details, still gelling (*meshing? melding?*) the old with the new. I had to laugh. It feels like I've been writing this forever, yet today is only the 7th day. Anyway, I wrote new stuff for about an hour, knocked out 1193 new words. On break now for awhile, letting nausea settle, etc.

Topic for the Day: Professional Writers Meeting (proposal)

I'm thinking of starting a "professional writers' meeting" day once a month and all of you will be invited. This would be a day to meet, talk, laugh and learn. There would be no cost, of course, other than transportation, time, whatever like that.

We would meet at a particular time on which we all agree. Then we'd discuss writing (our current WIPs, problems we're encountering, processes, various "tricks", different things we'd like to try, trends in publishing, etc.). Any topic directly related to writing would be on the table.

I'd like to start this in January.

If this interests you at all, please email me with your ideas and let's talk.

(Of course, I understand we all stay in touch, or can, via email. So give me your ideas.)

Thought for the Day: ***The art of writing is the ability to make use of suffering.***

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1193
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 1087

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date……. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4575 words. Total words to date……. 9517 words (revised)
Day 5….. 1502 words. Total words to date….. 11019 words
Day 6….. 2985 words. Total words to date….. 14004 words
Day 7….. 1193 words. Total words to date….. 15197 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1….. 2249 words. Total words to date….. 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2….. 4856 words. Total words to date….. 7105 words
Day 3….. 1205 words. Total words to date….. 8310 words
Day 4……. 770 words. Total words to date….. 9080 words
Day 5….. XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it…

November 24, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little late. Oof… I think nausea is my least-favorite thing. Took care of the usual email, journal entries and DWS stuff. Spent some of the day with Wes, some with his old friend/nemesis, some with a new friend. Got out and walked today too, just under 6 miles.

Topic for the Day: Anybody need a refresher on WITD? Here's the audio lecture if I didn't already send it to you. (Seriously, I don't remember.) Of course, it's copyrighted. Please do not share it with anyone outside the group. New expanded ones coming out soon. More on that later.

For the WITD Lecture, go to **http://hestanbrough.org/12-writing-into-the-dark/** (You MUST use this specific URL.)
The password is **WTD10hY41N01A4**

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2400 (exactly… weird)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 288

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words

Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
Day 7..... 1193 words. Total words to date..... 15197 words
Day 8..... 2400 words. Total words to date..... 17597 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it...
This isn't stalled. I'm just not writing it right now.

November 25, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little late again <groan>. Becoming a habit. Took care of the usual email and journal entries, then enjoyed listening to Week 4 of the SF workshop with DWS. Interesting stuff, mostly in that I already knew it. Some of the same stuff I've been teaching for years about characters and characterization. (Part of the value of these DWS workshops is finding out that I'm already doing some of the things this long-term, successful writer advocates doing. Sometimes validation of old techniques is as important as learning new techniques.) All of that took the first 2 hours of the day. On to writing.

Spent some of the day with the villain, some with a new friend to the protagonist. Did a short walk today too.

Topic for the Day: You Are Not Alone

Frankly, I've been feeling "stuck" in this sequel to Leaving Amarillo for the past two or three days. Haven't gotten a lot of new writing done on it, and that's primarily for two reasons: 1) it's a sequel so I've had to jell some timeline stuff and think about (conscious mind) what to bring from the first book into the second, but 2) MOSTLY being stuck is because I have three characters that are either new or have unexpectedly gained new prominence in the story.

Enter DWS. During a break this afternoon, I visited Dean's website and read his blog, as I do on most days. I was flatly amazed to read that he was "stuck" in Roosevelt Lake, his current novel WIP, because it isn't clear right now what role two new characters are supposed to play in the novel or in the series. I was thunderstruck.

Really? This guy who's been a successful writer for at least three decades is having exactly the same problem I'm having? And even for exactly the same reason? COOL! That gives me a bit of validation. Of course, it also feels good to watch the numbers grow day by day even when I'm "stuck."

Oh, and if you want to read his blog, check it out here: http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-24/

Sometime tomorrow I have to write my story of the week. Haven't done that yet, so that will take priority tomorrow. (grin)

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 1838
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 576

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
Day 7..... 1193 words. Total words to date..... 15197 words
Day 8..... 2400 words. Total words to date..... 17597 words
Day 9..... 1838 words. Total words to date..... 19435 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it...
This isn't stalled. I'm just not writing it right now.

November 26, 2014[edit]

First, if you do the whole Thanksgiving thing, enjoy! Happy Thanksgiving to all.

Up and out a bit early today (yay). Took care of the usual email and journal entries, then enjoyed listening to Week 4 of the Ideas workshop with DWS. Interesting stuff again, but again mostly in that I already knew it. This time, though, it's nothing I've taught before. I probably will teach a seminar (or at least record a new audio lecture) soon on Writing the Character-Driven Short Story. If you know anyone who might be interested, please let them know.

With two weeks remaining on the other (SF) workshop, I can already say that I endorse it wholeheartedly. If you want to learn to write speculative fiction—primarily science fiction and science fantasy—I strongly recommend investing in Dean's online workshop How to Write Science Fiction.

For writing, thus far I've started my short story of the week. Not sure yet what it's going to be, but it will be published, complete with a cover, before tomorrow morning. Odd how that one-time stress-inducing goal of writing a new short story every week has become an easy, almost forgetful part of the week. (grin)

Got the short story finished, cover done, posted to http://hestanbrough.com and published on Smashwords and Amazon. Score! I hope you'll check it out, especially if you enjoy character-driven science fiction. (It isn't about the science or even the situation; it's about the character's reaction to the situation and the science.) Of course, the challenge re-sets tomorrow at 9 a.m.

Topic for the Day: Go read DWS blog on Perspective. I can't say it better than this:
http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-25/

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2775 (short story, "Saving the Grenlow")

Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): XXX
Ebook covers: 1

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
Day 7..... 1193 words. Total words to date..... 15197 words
Day 8..... 2400 words. Total words to date..... 17597 words
Day 9..... 1838 words. Total words to date..... 19435 words
Day 10 .. XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX words
Didn't write on this today, so not counting the day.

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day XX..... XXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it...
This isn't stalled. I'm just not writing it right now.

November 27, 2014[edit]

Up and out around 2 a.m. Took care of the usual email. No journal entries.

Took time (almost two hours) for a little more housekeeping, though. One problem with writing a new short story per week is adding it to the site at HEStanbrough.com. Each week I have to recode the Amazon, Apple, B&N and Smashwords pages to reflect the new title. Doing so consists primarily of a lot of copying and (repeated) pasting, currently 14 times per page for four pages. Of course, I much prefer having to do that to the alternative. (grin)

Back to writing Wes 2. Odd that on what probably should have been an official nonwriting day I managed such a good day on this novel. Well, odd for most people. Pretty much normal for me. Kind'a makes me wish Thanksgiving happened every day.

I think for now my personal goal of 5,000 words per day is probably perfect. Thus far I've come close twice, but I haven't quite reached it yet. Need to learn to pace myself better, take breaks with more regularity.

Topic for the Day: Again, referring you to a topic by Dean Wesley Smith: Discounting. Take a look.
http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-26/

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4497
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 348

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
Day 7..... 1193 words. Total words to date..... 15197 words
Day 8..... 2400 words. Total words to date..... 17597 words
Day 9..... 1838 words. Total words to date..... 19435 words
Day 10 .. 4497 words. Total words to date..... 23932 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day XX..... XXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it...
This isn't stalled. I'm just not writing it right now.

November 28, 2014[edit]

Up and out around 2 a.m. Took care of the usual email. No journal entries.

Was just about to mount up and find Wes again this morning (spent much of yesterday with his nemesis, Otis McFadden) when a massive creature-machine that resembles a comparmentalized mantis came striding across my imagination. So I'm currently hiding in an EnviroSuit in the rocks on an alien hillside waiting for the thing to pass. THEN maybe I'll be able to go find ol' Wes again. (grin)

Okay, wrote what I could on "The Compartmentalized Mantis" (the story is actually based on the cover photo), then just a bit on Wes 2.

Topic for the Day: Again, referring you to a topic by Dean Wesley Smith. This post made me feel kindred, given that yesterday (Thanksgiving) was one of my two "big" days of writing on Wes 2. Take a look at Dean's brief essay, "Time Off from 'Work'" http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-27/

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1963 (1656 on "The Compartmentalized Mantis" short story)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): XXX

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
Day 7..... 1193 words. Total words to date..... 15197 words
Day 8..... 2400 words. Total words to date..... 17597 words

Day 9..... 1838 words. Total words to date..... 19435 words
Day 10 .. 4497 words. Total words to date..... 23932 words
Day 11 .... 307 words. Total words to date..... 24239 words

Writing of "Going Back" (long SF short story or maybe novella)
Day 1..... 2249 words. Total words to date..... 2249 words (a week or so ago)
Day 2..... 4856 words. Total words to date..... 7105 words
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 8310 words
Day 4..... 770 words. Total words to date..... 9080 words
Day XX..... XXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words
I'm only reporting on "Going Back" on days when I actually write on it...
This isn't stalled. I'm just not writing it right now.

November 29, 2014[edit]

I just realized this is November 29th already. Where did November go? For that matter, where did 2014 go? (Really, for me, where did 1978 go?)

Up and out around 2 a.m. Took care of the usual email. No journal entries. Lots of good information in this post. Read on.

In the hopes this might help you and/or serve as a reminder, a recent experience:

I emailed DWS about my most recent short story, "Saving the Grenlow":

"Seriously doubt I'm up to Asimov's or any of that yet, but I did just post (yesterday) my latest short story of the week, an SF piece a little under 3,000 words based on one of our assignments in the SF workshop. I think you might like it if you get time to drop by."

His response?

"Wow, Sheila would be angry if she read that. How dare you pre-edit her magazine for her? And it clearly hasn't sunk in yet for you that writers are the worst judges of their own work. You are going to need to learn that and stop devaluing your work with false judgements."

So there you go. As some of you know, I don't usually "devalue" my own work. That particular time, the groveling just snuck up on me, probably because I was talking with my mentor. But his "How dare you pre-edit her magazine for her?" really hit me. Duh. Don't devalue your own work with false judgments. Seriously.

Topic of the Day: Traditional Publishing for Short Fiction

Don't misread this. I would NEVER advocate going the traditional publishing route with collections or novels, not the way traditional publishers' contracts read right now.

On the other hand, there is absolutely nothing wrong with making a quick few hundred dollars on a short story BEFORE self-publishing it to Amazon and Smashwords, right?

If any of you would like to find traditional short story markets that pay professional rates, DWS and another person in the workshop with me suggested checking these sites:

Duotrope at http://duotrope.com

The Grinder at http://thegrinder.diabolicalplots.com/

Also, look for some of the big annual short story anthologies, like the 'Best Short stories of XYZ year" and some of the major genre annual anthologies. They'll list the markets the stories came from, as well as a list of markets that were considered for inclusion.
Pushcart Prize anthology also has great lists of nominated magazines as well, with addresses.

An admonition from DWS, just in case you need it: "With short fiction, always follow their guidelines, so go to each site to see if they are open and follow what they are doing."

Spent about two hours on all of the above and another hour restructuring Wes 2. Now to the writing.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3087
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 579

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
Day 7..... 1193 words. Total words to date..... 15197 words
Day 8..... 2400 words. Total words to date..... 17597 words
Day 9..... 1838 words. Total words to date..... 19435 words
Day 10 .. 4497 words. Total words to date..... 23932 words
Day 11 .... 307 words. Total words to date..... 24239 words
Day 12 .. 3087 words. Total words to date..... 27326 words

November 30, 2014[edit]

Rolled out before 2 a.m. Took care of the usual email, workshop stuff, journal entries.

Popped over to my "main" blog at HarveyStanbrough.com. Updated a couple posts there (including the one that will go out today) and basically copy/pasted a new post from here to there (traditional publishing markets for short stories). As it's scheduled right now, it'll publish in February 2015.

Maybe not a lot of "instructional" info today. The plan is to clear at least the 30,000-word mark today on Wes 2. Shouldn't be terribly difficult to achieve, and I hope I get far beyond it.

Spent about an hour and a half on all of the above. Now to the writing.

Knocked out 5212 words in six sessions between 3 a.m. and 11 a.m. and flashed past my goal by over 2,000 words. Not too shabby for an old guy having fun. My brain's tired now so I'm gonna watch a little football.

Topic of the Day: Persistence
Literally three days ago (Day 11 on the chart below) I thought I was gonna have to maybe let this one go. Really. Almost 25,000 words in, I thought it was hopelessly stalled. I had a new character and wasn't sure what to do with him; somewhere along the way I'd forgotten a story needs an antagonist; and I hadn't yet

realized the first book had an 8-month gap in the timeline.

Then I moved a few things around, found and began to fill that 8-month gap, spackled over a few inconsistencies between the first book and this one (appropriately, no magic), found a role for the new character, and stitched the timeline together with a POV technique I discovered several years ago that I absolutely love to use.

So now the writing is not only fun again, but how I'm writing it is fun again too. I'm learning so much from writing this novel. For one thing, it's all just me writing off into the dark, but more than that, I'm writing it from beginning to end and cycling back when I need to and I'm also constructing "blocks" and then moving them to where they need to be later. It's incredible.

This is literally the most fun a writer can have with his clothes on… or off. Yeah, you really don't wanna hack into my 'puter cam. (grin)

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 5212
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 555

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date……. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4575 words. Total words to date……. 9517 words (revised)
Day 5….. 1502 words. Total words to date….. 11019 words
Day 6….. 2985 words. Total words to date….. 14004 words
Day 7….. 1193 words. Total words to date….. 15197 words
Day 8….. 2400 words. Total words to date….. 17597 words
Day 9….. 1838 words. Total words to date….. 19435 words
Day 10 .. 4497 words. Total words to date….. 23932 words
Day 11 …. 307 words. Total words to date….. 24239 words
Day 12 .. 3087 words. Total words to date….. 27326 words
Day 13 .. 5212 words. Total words to date….. 32538 words

It boggles my mind that I could possibly finish this novel in only 15 days. That is not a goal though, and I doubt it will happen as both Monday and Tuesday are partially filled with other commitments.

December 1, 2014[edit]

Rolled out just after 3 a.m. Ugh. Hate getting up late. Took care of the usual email, workshop stuff, journal entries. Spent about an hour and a half on that and on just waking up. Now to the writing.

I'll spend a lot of today in Sierra Vista at a routine doc appointment with my heart guy, down from Tucson. Probably will be a non-writing day today, but maybe I'll salvage some of it. Excited about Wes 2 (even looking forward to a probable Wes 3) and "Going Back" and the much shorter story I started the other day are in the back of my mind too.

Really REALLY recommend you **visit http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-4-day-28/ and scroll down to read the comments**. Excellent stuff.

Okay, and you might wanna take a look at http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-

month-4-day-30/ as well. In that one he talks about "failing to success," something I think we all need to see. And take a look at his new goal for December. (grin)

Had my doc appointment and of course they were "running behind," this time by over an hour. Anyway, all's well. Got back here, settled in, hope to do a little writing now. Thus far today I've done nada point zilch. Ugh.

Well, did some rearranging plus got one good writing session of 1012 words. Will write like a madman in the morning .

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1012
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 362

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date……. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4575 words. Total words to date……. 9517 words (revised)
Day 5….. 1502 words. Total words to date….. 11019 words
Day 6….. 2985 words. Total words to date….. 14004 words
Day 7….. 1193 words. Total words to date….. 15197 words
Day 8….. 2400 words. Total words to date….. 17597 words
Day 9….. 1838 words. Total words to date….. 19435 words
Day 10 .. 4497 words. Total words to date….. 23932 words
Day 11 …. 307 words. Total words to date….. 24239 words
Day 12 .. 3087 words. Total words to date….. 27326 words
Day 13 .. 5212 words. Total words to date….. 32538 words
Day 14 .. 1012 words. Total words to date….. 33530 words

December 2, 2014[edit]

Rolled out late again. Watched *Slingblade* on an Encore channel last night. You wanna write an interesting character? Write an extremely simple man who has a powerful sense of right and wrong and the ability to determine his place in the world.

Hate getting up late. Took care of the usual email and journal entries. Spent a half-hour on that, and on to the writing. I have a board meeting to attend today at 10 a.m. and two workshops to attend today as well. Probably do the workshops around my "noon" at about 6 a.m.

Even more excited about Wes 2 today (and looking forward to a probable Wes 3) and short stories still in the back of my mind.

Topic of the Day: Quieting Critical Voice…. I was gonna write a whole long thing on this but the thing is…

- It ain't easy.
- You know what it is and how it sounds in your head.
- It's tricky.
- You have to quiet it anyway.

All of that being said, the best reason not to let a full day go by without writing is because it gives ammo to your critical voice. You lost one full day and nothing bad happened, so surely one more day won't be deadly to your career. Please be careful, all of you. Try to write every day, even if it's only 15 minutes or a half-hour, even if only to show your critical mind it is not the boss of you. (grin)

Goodness… writing went much better today than the numbers indicate. Banged out 3863 new words of fiction before having to leave for my meeting at 10, got back and went for a short walk up a sandy wash, got back from that and was excited to begin the next chapter and realized—! I haven't attended the workshops yet!

So I set down the main topic for the next two chapters and will start hot and heavy on them in the morning….. Then I popped over here to post this.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3863
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 496

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date……. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4575 words. Total words to date……. 9517 words (revised)
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Day 15 .. 3863 words. Total words to date….. 37393 words
Looking at finishing this novel by Friday, 12/5. Not too shabby for an old guy learning new tricks. (grin)

December 3, 2014[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30. No excuses other than laziness. Took care of the usual email and journal entries. That took awhile, but it seemed important.

Apropos of absolutely nothing, I realized when I got up this morning I was Excited. Like we (well, like I) used to be on Christmas morning when I was a kid. (I despise the term "kid" when people use it to mean "child"; I use it only in regards to myself.) I'm that excited now at the prospect of getting out of bed and rushing back to my fictional world. Seriously. How wonderful is that? (Yeah, the question is rhetorical.)

I got through one workshop yesterday and a few vids from another one. They weren't buffering right. Spent far more time with my stupid critical mind than I ever want to spend at one stretch. Later today or tomorrow sometime I have to listen to another full workshop plus finish the one I was unable to listen to last night. Because the vids are all online, I suspect they would buffer faster and play without so much frustrating jerkiness at this time of day (2 a.m. +). However, even though I paid $300 a pop for the workshops, I'd rather write. So… priorities, I guess.

The DWS blog today is on writers being the worst possible judge of their own work. This strikes pretty much everybody. It struck me recently (I noted it a few days ago) and after he chewed my butt about it, it actually struck DWS too. Read about it here if you're interested:
http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-5-day-2/

Also have to write the short story of the week sometime today or tonight. Sometime. Crap. Maybe I'll do that first, just to knock out an easy goal and then get back to Wes 2.

Yesterday I talked briefly on quieting the critical voice. Today the topic is looking to be priorities.

NOTE: What follows is a semi-rant that I needed to write for myself. I needed to see it, have it recorded so I can go back and look at it from time to time. Some of it gets personal (my own stuff). I think it might help some of you. If I didn't think that, I would have written it elsewhere. Okay, so skip it if you want (skip down to Today's Writing), or read it if you want.

Topic of the Day: Priorities

My priority is to write, period. Yes, if the house is on fire and I hit a good stopping point (*leave a jagged edge!* but only if that works for you) and the door is warm with radiant heat from flames, I'll interrupt my writing long enough to carry my writing laptop out through the window behind my desk. So in that instance, okay fine, escaping the fire would temporarily take first priority. But only because if I didn't escape it I wouldn't be able to write more later. Seriously. Don't test me on this unless you're willing to pay my landlord replacement value for whatever damage the fire does.

I completely understand that other people have other priorities. That's fine. I'm not comparing. I'm just saying, my number one priority is my writing. My characters. My story. My creative mind and voice, acting in concert to Make Stuff Up. Why? For a lot of reasons, but mostly because I finally realized that I (like everyone else) can set my own priorities.

Here's the thing:

- I'm in my 60s. I wrote my first story when I was six, then frittered away 50+ years TELLING everyone the One Thing in my life was Writing and that I was a writer instead of, you know, actually writing. (Disclaimer—Maybe you haven't frittered away even an instant of your life. Maybe you're coming to writing only now because that's what you want. That's fine. But that's not me, and this is about me.)
- I bought into all those stupid myths for 50+ years. From a writing standpoint, I literally wasted well over 50 years. In a typical lifespan, that's somewhere in the vicinity of 2/3. And due to heart things, etc. my lifespan is not typical. That sort of thing adds impetus to the drive.
- I was stupid enough to use my talents (I was dipped in the Language River at birth, I'm sure of it) to help Other People with their writing instead of writing my own stuff. What a freakin' moron, eh? I think I'm a reasonably intelligent guy, yet it took me over 20 of the past 50+ years to finally realize that most people who call themselves writers DON'T EVEN WANT to learn to write. Most of them think once they know how to form the capital letter A with two long sticks and a short one and grunt in words that are longer than one syllable, they know all they need to know. And they believe they can learn what little they don't know by reading articles with titles like "Make Big Money At Home In Your Spare Time As A Writer!" I don't know. Maybe that's why I get a little carried away, even excited, when I stumble across a group of writers who seem to actually thirst for knowledge and love writing.

Yesterday during a board meeting, I told a new friend I have no regrets in my life other than some things I didn't try (yet). On further reflection, that isn't entirely true.

I regret not having come across Heinlein's Rules when I was six. And please don't make excuses for me.

Don't hand me that crap about "but if you were six you wouldn't have grasped the significance" etc. because the simple fact is, nobody knows. I prefer to believe I *would* have grasped the significance. I prefer to believe I would have grasped the significance with both hands and never let it go. And the thing is, if I'd stumbled across Heinlein's Rules when I was six, how big a writer would I possibly be today?

If I could go back and change just one thing, it would be that. I would have learned Heinlein's Rules when I was six and then ignored all the stupid nonsensical asinine inane control-freak myths the English teachers and other non-writers so pretentiously gave me via rough-edged suppository over all these years.

Okay, enough explaining and whining for one morning. Now I've frittered away two and a half hours. Ugh. No more. But I needed to say all this, just for myself. Rant over.

On to the writing.

Okay, I sort of cheated a little bit, but not really. As you know, for the story of the week I have to write it during that week (my rule). But I'm spoiled. I didn't WANNA stop writing on Wes 2 in order to write the short story for the week. So I didn't. I wrote what will be a chapter of Wes 2 (it's a little different in story form, but not much), but it's also a stand-alone short story. You can read it at http://hestanbrough.com. It will also serve as a glimpse at the novel, which I expect will be finished and out in the next few days.

Having to kick off here now to listen to Week 5 of the Ideas workshop. Earlier I stopped writing (after 3256 words) to finish listening to the crap I didn't get to listen to yesterday. Worked out all right, but I just remembered the Ideas workshop posted this morning. I completely forgot about it. So I'll go ahead and post this thing now and then go there and do that. If I write more later tonight, I'll just cheat and add those words to tomorrow's totals.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3256 (seriously, I should've gotten twice this many today)
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 1452

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
Day 3….. 1226 words. Total words to date……. 4942 words
Day 4….. 4575 words. Total words to date……. 9517 words (revised)
Day 5….. 1502 words. Total words to date….. 11019 words
Day 6….. 2985 words. Total words to date….. 14004 words
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Day 11 …. 307 words. Total words to date….. 24239 words
Day 12 .. 3087 words. Total words to date….. 27326 words
Day 13 .. 5212 words. Total words to date….. 32538 words
Day 14 .. 1012 words. Total words to date….. 33530 words
Day 15 .. 3863 words. Total words to date….. 37393 words
Day 16 .. 3256 words. Total words to date….. 40649 words
Will I finish by Friday, 12/5? Don't know, don't care. Just enjoying writing the thing.

December 4, 2014[edit]

Wow. Not up until 3. Email and there was only one journal entry. Here to start this and then to writing.

Still have to listen to a few vids in one workshop. Annoying when they don't buffer right.

Topic of the Day: *The End of the Topic of the Day*

The energy's draining out of our little mutual-blog experiment. At this point I think maybe I'm doing all of this only for myself. Not sure anyone else is reading it, so me offering little tidbits is kind of inane. Besides, you guys all know what you're doing. So I'm scratching this topic of the day silliness.

Silly too for me to constantly offer updates on the DWS blog. [shrug] I just get excited about stuff. So I'll just say a final time, I do recommend you all visit the DWS blog each day. Some extremely good stuff there pretty much every day.

If any of you have a question re writing, you already know you can email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I'll continue to post here, but only as a kind of diary for myself. Like keeping track of my steps and miles on my pedometer motivates me to keep walking, taking a few minutes to record this journal each day helps motivate me to keep writing. It also limbers up my writing head. If you guys read it that's fine. If you don't, that's fine too. I wish you writing.

As I mentioned yesterday, my priority is to write, period. Also yesterday, especially while grappling with listening to vids that didn't want to run right, I kept thinking *Ugh! Man, I need to be writing!* So probably no more online workshops for me. I'll still offer a workshop or intensive or seminar from time to time (maybe) but I'm not gonna take anymore of them. I'm not sure even the house being on fire will take priority.

Important: If any of you are considering taking any of DWS online workshops and you'd like my recommendations, email me and let me know. I've listened to three of them so far and am on my fourth now. I've also listened to several of his lectures.

Okay, on to the writing.

Went through Wes 2, changing a few relationships and cutting a LOT of chunks that just didn't belong. I kept track of new words but also am eating the ones I cut. So today's total below is "revised." Is this kind of a PITA? Yes. Do I mind, considering I'm going to finish the second novel in a series within about 20 days? Huhuh. Nope. And I've learned a LOT.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. (I hope). Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4236
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 595

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1….. 2144 words. Total words to date……. 2144 words
Day 2….. 1572 words. Total words to date……. 3716 words
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Day 13 .. 5212 words. Total words to date..... 32538 words
Day 14 .. 1012 words. Total words to date..... 33530 words
Day 15 .. 3863 words. Total words to date..... 37393 words
Day 16 .. 3256 words. Total words to date..... 40649 words
Day 17 .. 4236 words. Total words to date..... 36883 words (revised)
Should finish this tomorrow or Sunday. On Saturday I'll be in Green Valley for the book fair.

December 5, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Checked/answered email and there was only one journal entry. That was about fifteen minutes, then jumped straight into writing, doing the kid at Christmas thing. Excited.

Came back here to start this journal entry after some more trimming on Wes 2 and after the first 1200 new words. Note that I'm not rewriting here. Thanks to the post-writing outline I put together yesterday, I'm able to see the whole thing more clearly. This morning I went back through parts of it and cut a few more chunks that were repetitive, etc. Unintentional repetition is as distracting as any other flaw in writing. Lesson learned. From now on, I will create a chapter-by-chapter post-writing outline as I go on everything I write that's longer than a short story. But the point here is this: It's an outline of where I've BEEN, not where I'm going. Still letting the characters lead me by the hand.

Okay, back to the writing. Very good day. Great day actually, given all the moving and cutting and still coming up with over 3,000 new words. If I leave this in a chapter format, the ending will happen in Chapter 22 or 23, and part of today's stuff I had to go back and insert Chapter 12 (about 2200 words). Also decided I'm going to take my writing 'puter to the book fair with me in Green Valley tomorrow. No reason I can't write while I'm there. Beats twiddling my thumbs.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3164
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 428

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
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Day 14 .. 1012 words. Total words to date..... 33530 words
Day 15 .. 3863 words. Total words to date..... 37393 words
Day 16 .. 3256 words. Total words to date..... 40649 words

Day 17 .. 4236 words. Total words to date..... 36883 words (revised)
Day 18 .. 3164 words. Total words to date..... 40047 words (revised)
Might finish this tomorrow, maybe even while I'm in Green Valley for the book fair. (grin)

December 6, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2. Only email. No workshops, too early for DWS new blog post, and read/commented on journal entries last night. (Welcome back, Ann!) That was only about fifteen minutes, and then I went straight to the writing 'puter, still doing the kid at Christmas thing. Excited. And this one's almost over. And I'm SO looking forward to the next novel. It won't be in this series and I currently have zero clues what it will be about, but I'm looking forward to writing it. (grin)

Wrote a little while, then succumbed to the notion that maybe I need a bookmark or business card or something to hand out at the book fair. (Seriously? Another stupid myth.) Worked on that for nearly TWO HOURS before it hit me: I have BOOKS at the book fair. Why would I want to hand out something to folks who have no intention of buying a book? Because the business card or bookmark has a magical quality that will slowly work on their mind and make them want to buy one of my books "someday"? Nope.

Sorry. Ain't gonna happen. Seriously, I've been at this long enough to know, it just doesn't work that way. A lot of looky-loos(ers) collect business cards and bookmarks. Some even do so to make you, the writer, feel better. (grin) Can you imagine? Then they toss the business cards outright, sometimes in the trash bin right outside the venue.

Of course, they might keep the bookmark and use it while they're reading someone else's book, but will it ever spur them to buy one of yours? Nope. Think about it. If they were going to buy yours, they'd have bought it while you were standing there, ready to sign it for them. So yeah, I'm gonna make up a few bookmarks to take with me, but probably I'll pass those out in books I actually sell. I passed along a "build me a bookmark" note to my wife (it was her idea in the first place) and came here to start this journal entry. Now back to the writing.

Then to Green Valley around 10, eat lunch there, then get to the venue about 12:30 to set up. I'll finish this and post it this evening after I get back.

Okay, back from GV. Was pretty much a bust, per what I kind'a sort'a expected. Several people were more in love with the idea of being A Writer (glorified) than actually being a writer. Whatever. Anyway, got only a smidgeon done today as I was "on" all day. Should have known I'd get nothing done there but gladhanding. Still, got to see a few real writers, friends and acquaintances so that part was good.

Very soon (I think) I'll be issuing a challenge to the professional writers I know. Just have to work out the details.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1307
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 678

Writing of Sequel to Leaving Amarillo
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words
Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words

Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
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Day 13 .. 5212 words. Total words to date..... 32538 words
Day 14 .. 1012 words. Total words to date..... 33530 words
Day 15 .. 3863 words. Total words to date..... 37393 words
Day 16 .. 3256 words. Total words to date..... 40649 words
Day 17 .. 4236 words. Total words to date..... 36883 words (revised)
Day 18 .. 3164 words. Total words to date..... 40047 words (revised)
Day 19 .. 1307 words. Total words to date..... 41354 words
Hope to finish this tomorrow. I kind'a know where it's going now so I just wanna finish it so I can start the next novel.

December 7, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little before 2. Very little email, no workshops, too early for DWS new blog post, and no journal entries. Cleaned up a couple places where the narrator got too big for his britches a few other things my first reader caught. Couple hours for all of the above, so finally now on to writing. Should finish Wes 2 today. Hope I can come up with a good title. (grin)

Very soon (I think) I'll be issuing a chance to participate in a challenge. Just have to work out the details. Naturally, there are no "have-tos" attached. Just a chance to participate if you want.

Also hope soon to put together an absolutely intense daylong intensive that will include these topics, yes, all crammed into one day:

- Heinlein's Rules – annotated. What they mean. Maybe more importantly, what they do NOT mean.
- Writing Into The Dark (a crash course) – Faces of the critical mind. Trading critical mind for creative mind. Nuts and bolts stuff. This is NOT theory. This is How to do it.
- Increasing Productivity – Figure out your schedule, then decide on the number of hours in the chair, number of words you produce per hour. (Includes how to write 700+ publishable words per hour if you aren't already doing that.)
- Cycling – This is essential when writing off into the dark if you don't want to rewrite (and you DON'T).
- Writing the Next Sentence
- Writing the Next Scene – The scene is that segment of the story that is defined by character, setting and situation.
- Writing Setting – What is essential to bring a setting (and the story) to life?

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1972
Nonfiction words: 0
Blog(s): 456

Writing of Longing for Mexico (Sequel to Leaving Amarillo)
Day 1..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 2144 words
Day 2..... 1572 words. Total words to date..... 3716 words

Day 3..... 1226 words. Total words to date..... 4942 words
Day 4..... 4575 words. Total words to date..... 9517 words (revised)
Day 5..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 11019 words
Day 6..... 2985 words. Total words to date..... 14004 words
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Day 15 .. 3863 words. Total words to date..... 37393 words
Day 16 .. 3256 words. Total words to date..... 40649 words
Day 17 .. 4236 words. Total words to date..... 36883 words (revised)
Day 18 .. 3164 words. Total words to date..... 40047 words (revised)
Day 19 .. 1307 words. Total words to date..... 41354 words
Day 20 .. 1972 words. Total words to date..... 43326 words (done)

December 8, 2014[edit]

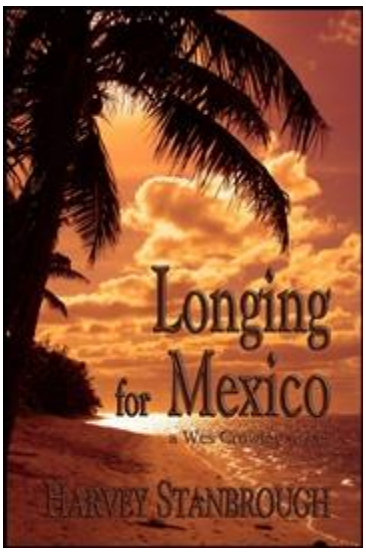
First, welcome to my longtime friend, Alison Holt. Alison is the first member of this group who wasn't at the WITD seminar. She has, however, listened to the audio lecture and heard me talk a little bit about it (Just Write the Next Sentence) during a seminar in Tucson. Alison also is an incredibly talented writer, and frankly, I invited her here to play mostly because I'm a control freak and I want desperately to speed up her process so she'll get more work out there more quickly. (grin) How's that for being honest?

Okay, rolled out a little before 3. (I know. I'm a slug. Kind'a feel like one today too with a head full of sno— I mean, bugg— aw, you know, that gooey stuff that makes people completely overreact if you sling it off your finger and even a LITTLE gets on their shoes. Or hair. Whatever.) Answered email first, no workshops today, and great journal entries. All of the above plus some business stuff for a few hanging-on website clients plus writing most of this blog post took almost two hours. (Writing even this stuff is always fun though. The business stuff is drudgery.)

DWS continued his post on Pulp Speed yesterday. Pretty motivating stuff about failing to success.

After reading that DWS post, just for grins (and to motivate myself) I ran the numbers from October 27 through December 7. (I started writing the first novel on Oct 27 and finished the second one on Dec 7.) That's 41 days.

During that 41 day period I wrote 2 novels = 83,922 words and 5 short stories = 17,980. Total new words of written and published fiction during that 41 days = 101,902. Complete success.



That was the happy part of the surprise. When I did a little more math, I found I'd averaged a little less than 2500 words per day. Of course, that included nonwriting days, but still, averages are what really count in this business. Failed my goal of writing 4,000 words per day, but failed to success.

During that time I was also doing all the life things that crop up. Finally, during that same time period I also compiled and published (ebook and paper) five 5-story collections of short fiction, three 10-story collections of short fiction, and those 2 novels. (Paper edition of the second novel will be out in a couple weeks.)

Was thinking of issuing a challenge but haven't figured out a way to do that yet other than for short writing. Everyone writes a different number of words per hour, hours per day etc. I think I'll have to leave the challenge up to you.

In addition to the other stuff I reported yesterday, also created an ebook cover for the new novel (that's it over there to the left) and published it to Amazon and Smashwords.

Today will be a nonwriting day. Gonna knock out a lot of admin stuff and come back fresh tomorrow morning. (grin)

Okay, so for admin stuff, thus far today I

- loaded Microsoft Word to my writing 'puter and got rid of LibreOffice (which I recommended before). LibreOffice is a good program, but a bit buggy and jumpy and clunky. At least those are the technical terms. If you can't get Word, I still recommend LibreOffice, but otherwise, No.
- switched an old 'puter off Norton Internet Security and put it on a newer 'puter.
- added a new page to Harvey Stanbrough & Friends Writing in Public for Longing for Mexico (novel 2 in the Wes Crowley series)
- wrote a blurb for the same

Later today I will

- review my notes from DWS lectures and workshops I've taken thus far and took notes from notes, if that makes any sense
- write and offer a writing intensive on How to Write the Character Driven Short Story and announce it to the world (you guys first)
- write and record (if not offer live) a few other shorter lectures I have in mind (Writing Scenes, Writing Setting, Cycling Ain't All About Bicycles, etc.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. No numbers for today except this blog. I'll report nonfiction words tomorrow, or not at all....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX
Blog(s): 659

December 9, 2014[edit]

Okay, rolled out about 2:30. Ran through a LOT of email, decided to attend two workshops early and get them done.

Final workshop of SF. I highly recommend this workshop. It has a TON of great information about writing fiction in general even if you never write a line of SF. It also dispels a LOT of false notions about writing SF. If you think at all that you'd like to write SF but "can't" for some reason, I recommend this workshop. Also attended the second week of Depth workshop. Seems pretty good so far, but necessarily basic.

Okay, pretty much gave the first three hours of the day to all of the above.

Took most of the rest of today off. Had a great walk although it was only a little over four and a half miles.

Mostly today I "thought about" writing. And of course, thinking about writing is not writing. Only putting new words on paper is writing, at least for me. That's my rule for myself. Today, I re-realized I have to remember not only to write from my subconscious creative mind, but write what it wants to write. Duh. I'm such a moron sometimes.

So my world resets tomorrow. New day, new goals. (grin) Beginning on December 10, my new goals are these:

Daily Goal… 3000 words per day AVERAGE. That will put me well over 1,000,000 words for the year, what DWS calls Pulp Speed. I'd truly love to be in that club. But of course, no cheating. These have to be publishable words of fiction. Honestly, this should be no problem. Over the past 41 days I wrote well over 100,000 words and I wasn't stressed or taxed in the slightest.

As I continue in this process it becomes easier and easier to trust my subconscious and Just Write, and of course, that means more new publishable words of fiction on the page. Again, what I have to remember is to Write What My Subconscious Wants to Write instead of trying to "decide" (conscious, critical mind) what to write. No more of that nonsense.

Weekly Goal… Remains one new short story every week. Every five short stories go into a collection. Every ten short stories go into another collection. Every collection goes into both ebook and paper. (I might adjust this goal beginning in January to one story from Harvey Stanbrough per week AND one from a persona per week. Gervasio's really been tugging on my sleeve lately.)

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1360 (all on a short story that I might or might not finish)
Blog(s): 435

Back to life tomorrow….

December 10, 2014[edit]

Okay, rolled out about 2:30 again. Not a lot of email this morning, a couple journal entries, all in about ten minutes.

Attended the final installment of the Ideas workshop first thing this morning.

Today also is the first day of my new daily goal, but I'll make it no sweat.

Planned to take a day off from walking to snap myself back into form, but ended up walking anyway. Logged 5.6 miles.

Okay I did NOT get the new novel started, but no problem there. I did write 1335 more words on the SF

story I worked on yesterday (not sure yet what it will be). Then I had to get up and move around so I ended up going for an extended walk. Then I had three short sessions and wrote 2511 more words on what will be the story of the week.

That one's not titled yet but it's also SF and features a really large praying mantis. It also features a sense of humor and is a great deal of fun to write. I'll finish it tonight or tomorrow morning early.

FYI, I'm looking at teaching a WRITING intensive titled How to Write the Character Driven Story in January. I'm looking at either the 17th or the 24th. Let me know whether either of those dates will work for you. (If both are fine, please let me know that too.) And I'm fully aware not all of you will want this, so no problem there. If you ARE interested, just let me know which date(s). Thanks!

The intensive will include Getting the Idea, How to Write the Opening, How to Select a Genre, The POV Character, Writing Setting, Writing Scene and more. Note: this intensive will be good for writing any story from a short story up through a novel.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3846 (story I'm developing + story of the week)
Blog(s): 354

Writing of Mantis Something or Other (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 2511 words. Total words to date..... 2511 words

Writing of Xxxxxxxxxxx (new novel)
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

December 11, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a bit before 2 this morning, so there's that. Checked and responded to a few emails, commented briefly on a couple journal entries, came here to start this.

This is the paradoxical time of year for me. This is the time of year when I'm most likely to want to curl up and do nothing (hibernation, anyone?) until Late Spring. Fortunately, it's also the time of year when I'm more on my guard and determined to shake my head and yell "NO!" until the blood-sucking cold monster backs slowly away and lets me do my job.

And frankly, moving through the cold air in the house is like walking through a series of sheets of ice crystals (yes, I would very much like cheese with my whine), but my writing 'puter is on the other side of those sheets, so what am I gonna do?

Seems like my limitations are always magnified at this time of year too. For example, my physical limitations are more painful, deeper, and occur more frequently. But physical limitations simply are what they are. I just have to put up with them and continue.

My emotional limitations (Emotional Limitations: Brought to You by the Good People at Chemical Imbalances Are Us) are enhanced by the grey layer of depression that seems to settle over everything. Not that I'm constantly depressed at all, but perhaps constantly threatened with the possibility of becoming depressed. Slipping into depression doesn't take much of a shove for me this time of year. So I just lean into it a bit so the shove has less effect.

And mental limitations... well, any normal person will tell you that I certainly have those, but the only

ones that matter to me are those that manifest as my conscious critical mind, that benevolent guard. My mental limitations are evoked or made larger by my physical and emotional limitations. This is the time of year when my conscious, critical mind is fist-bumping itself because it knows how easy it is to make me succumb to its "protection."

- It's harder to drag myself out early despite how much sleep I've gotten.
- Harder to open my writing 'puter.
- Harder to put my fingers on the keys.
- Harder to Just Write.

For me, all of this should be like saying "It's hard to obey the law of gravity" because honestly, I LOVE writing. There's nothing I'd rather do. But it isn't.

This time of year it's legitimately more difficult for me to get up, open my writing 'puter, put my fingers on the keyboard and just write what comes. That's what makes goals and streaks so very important, at least to me. I've been writing a story a week since April 16. I haven't missed. That's a streak. I'm setting other goals, working to build other streaks.

Goals drive me to the writing 'puter. The desire to keep my streaks alive drives me to the writing 'puter.

So on the other side of the Goals stuff below, I'm gonna Just Write for awhile. 'Cause, you know, it's what I do.

Now, I like goals so I'm gonna keep talking about them for awhile in my posts only because seeing them more often will help me. If it helps you too, so much the better.

Daily Goal… 3000 words per day AVERAGE for a YEAR. That will put me well over 1,000,000 words for the year. (As I continue in this process it becomes easier and easier to trust my subconscious and Just Write, and of course, that means more new publishable words of fiction on the page. Like any other muscle, writing into the dark and trusting my subconscious need exercise or they will atrophy.)

Weekly Goal… Remains one new short story every week. (Might adjust this upward later.)

Today I will finish and post and publish the short story for this week. Then I'll ask my subconscious what else it wants to write.

Okay, to the writing.

Finished the mantis story in two short sessions. Things will be busy now around the house until about 8:30, so breaking now maybe until after my walk.

Weird. Started in a new place, walked out and back, didn't look at my pedometer until I got back, and still somehow managed to log another 5.6 miles exactly. Same as yesterday. Now lunch, then back to writing.

Knocked out the first 2846 words of Wes 3, tentatively titled South to Mexico. Good enough. Off now for NYPD Blue and then to watch the Cardinals whip up on the ill-fated St. Louis Rams. (Sigh… remember when the Cardinals were in St. Louis and the Rams were in LA?) Anyway…

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4043 (1197 on story of the week)
Blog(s): 827

Writing of The Compartmentalized Mantis (story of the week, hope you enjoyed it, great fun to write)
Day 1..... 2511 words. Total words to date..... 2511
Day 2..... 1197 words. Total words to date..... 3708 (done)

Writing of South to Mexico (new novel)
Day 1..... 2846words. Total words to date..... 2846

December 12, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a bit before 2 again this morning. Checked and responded to a few emails, commented briefly on a couple journal entries, checked for more comments on the DWS blog.

It's become pretty much a daily habit to read the DWS blog and then check back each day for comments on the previous post. Some of the comments are incredibly eye opening, especially as regards how many writers still are stuck in harmful beliefs and how staunchly sometimes they will defend the very beliefs that are harming them. This is nothing short of amazing to me.

Every day I'm thankful I found DWS again and even more thankful I overcame my fears enough to at least try what he offers. If I hadn't, I would have written maybe two or three short stories since April 16. Instead, I've written FORTY short stories in those thirty-four weeks. I wouldn't have written ANY novels. Instead, I've written two and I'm working on the third. I wouldn't have compiled any short story collections. Instead, I've compiled and published, in ebook and paper, twelve collections, including one I just compiled and published this morning.

Just sayin', if you hear any advice about writing and your first reaction is an almost frenzied "No possible way can I do that," recognize that as your critical mind trying to protect you from failing. Then shove it aside and try the new advice. If it works for you, keep trying it.

Daily Goal... 3000 words per day AVERAGE. On track so far. That will put me well over 1,000,000 words for the year. And again, as I continue in this process it becomes easier and easier to trust my subconscious and Just Write, and of course, that means more new publishable words of fiction on the page.

Weekly Goal... Remains one new short story every week. If I adjust this, I will adjust it upward.

Okay, to the writing.

Knocked out 1237 words in a slightly long session. Then I switched gears, compiled and published the ebook version of that new five-story collection, *Strainge Times* by Eric Stringer. (He likes that spelling of strainge. It's like strange with a strain, see?) Hope to get the print version going in a week or so but no major rush there.

Off for what I hoped would be a very good walk. Fell short at 2.8 miles, but in a sandy wash and great fun. Encountered a Border Patrol agent (he did not see me) and practiced some evasion techniques 'cause, you know, y'gotta do something... just to keep my hand in.

Not even noon yet and back to writing. Should be a very good day. Tapped out another 1302 words, realized I hadn't updated all the venue pages (Amazon, Apple, etc.) at HEStanbrough.com so went and did that. I have 70 short stories up there now, plus 14 collections. Cool.

Back to writing for a bit. Probably a partial day off tomorrow, so I want to get as many as I can today. Two more average sessions of 978 and 887 words. Good enough.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3102
Blog(s): 542

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846 words
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948 words

December 13, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a bit before 2 again this morning. Woohoo! Checked and responded to a few emails, worked on a woman's website for her (utter waste of time, that, but just plowing through it is easier than arguing… I'm SO glad I'm not doing that stuff full time anymore), commented briefly on a couple journal entries. All of that was a little over a half-hour.

In this minuscule town (St. David) there are TWO helo pads that LifeFlight (or some similar service) uses. There's a chopper turning blades on the one near my house right now. Feel bad for whoever's affected by that.

A few new guidelines I'm trying to bear in mind:

- *Everything* in life is a matter of priorities. My critical mind often will use that to attempt to "save me" from writing. When I'm about to write, suddenly doing something else (*anything* else) becomes a priority. And I shake my index finger at my critical mind. *No! BAD critical mind!*
- Productivity is what I'm all about as a writer. The more work I put out there, the more books and stories I have to feed on each other and the more income I will receive from my writing. Period. This is the same reason every time I get five new stories I slap them into a collection. When I get ten, I put them in another collection. That gives me three streams of revenue from each story I write.
- Productivity can be reduced to mathematics, and math is a concrete, finite thing. Here's the equation: Productivity = words per hour x hours in the chair. If you want to increase your productivity, you have to increase one of those two factors.
- Words per hour… if you're writing 1000 words per hour (sounds like a lot, doesn't it?) that's only 17 words per minute. Think about that. Writing 1000 words per hour gives you a LOT of time for staring off into space. If you're getting less than 700 or 800 words per hour, you might want to check in with yourself and figure out what you're doing during that hour. You can safely bet it's linked to your critical mind. Seriously. Don't tell me or anyone else about it if you don't want to (nobody's business but your own), but if you're serious about being a professional writer, Fix It.

A little more on that… a lot of us took typing in high school. My best rate was 60 mostly error-free words per minute. Extrapolated out, that's 3600 words per hour. Do I expect to be able to write 3600 words per hour? Of course not. But it kind'a makes that 1000 words per hour seem really do-able. You can look back and punch in your own figures.

My new personal daily goal is to write 4,000 words of fiction per day, whether on the novel WIP or whatever. I don't have another day job. If I can't spend four hours per day in my writing chair (especially with my schedule), something's seriously wrong. And if I do decide to take a day off, that's fine. If I don't plan a day off but fall short of my daily goal, I don't care. The goal re-sets the next day anyway. Besides a goal is a GOAL, something to reach for.

Weekly Goal… Remains one new short story every week, but I suspect that's gonna jump quite a bit as I exercise my Idea muscle and write what comes.

Okay, I've been up just short of an hour now. To the writing....

Got 1298 in one session, 992 in another. So two hours, two sessions. I also slashed away a LOT of what I'd written the past two days. That was another 15 – 20 minutes. One big chunk will become a short story elsewhere, and the other part I just tossed. So I have revised numbers below on the new novel.

Partial day off today as I have to go to Sierra Vista for groceries, pet stuff, etc.

Ugh... got back and decided to raise prices on a boatload of my stuff. Learned some really good stuff about getting indie books into bookstores, and a HUGE part of that is setting prices of your print books correctly. So I spent most of the afternoon at CreateSpace (my printer), Amazon and Smashwords, adjusting prices on print books, ebook collections, and nonfiction ebooks. I've always devalued my own work. No more. Now I know the prices are fair and where they should be, so I'm just not gonna look back anymore.

I think that's the best part about being a writer. Always Looking Forward.

On my desktop (all three screens) I have four lines of text:

Write the next scene.

Write the next sentence.

Keep the story moving forward.

Writers Write.

Oof... didn't mean for this to get so long. Okay, back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2290
Blog(s): 842

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1..... 2846 words. Total words to date..... 2846 words
Day 2..... 3102 words. Total words to date..... 5948 words
Day 3..... 2290 words. Total words to date..... 5294 words (adjusted)

December 14, 2014[edit]

Rolled out around 1:30. Yay. Hope this is a trend. I relish the extra half-hour to wake up, do emails, etc. Seventy-two emails this morning but almost half of them were from Amazon saying the books I repriced yesterday were up for sale again. (grin) So I just deleted those out of hand.

If you're wondering about pricing print books, here's the gist:

- Don't devalue your work. Just don't. I did that for years. No more.
- Set your list price so you make at least $2 on Extended Distribution, the royalty you receive after everybody (Baker & Taylor, Ingram, the other smaller distributors, bookstores) take their cut. No matter which printer you use (I use CreateSpace) there's a nifty free royalty calculator at https://www.createspace.com/Products/Book/#content6:royaltyCalculator. I strongly recommend you bookmark it or whatever you call it.
- On all vendors (Amazon, B&N, et al) the print price and the ebook price are linked. At the worst,

> you won't sell many print books but the price of your print book will drive readers to buy your ebooks.

Okay, got to the comments and journal entries next. Thanks, Bonnie! And glad to see you coming back, Dawn! Then I flopped over to my main "teacher" website and wrote a new quick blog post based on the guidelines I posted here yesterday and the list above on pricing print books. All of that took just a tad under two hours, during which I somehow came to full consciousness. (grin)

To the writing….

When I stopped yesterday, I thought maybe I was stuck. This morning I started by reading over what I'd written the last few days. By the time I got back to the present point in the novel, I realized I didn't need to write the "transition" scene I was TRYING (conscious mind) to write. I can always tell conscious mind because everything grinds to a halt, everything feels like work. Once I got past that and realized I don't have to "get" Wes from here to there (boring) but just begin with him BEING there, the muddy waters cleared once again. I cycled back, added about 200 words to set up the new scene, and am off and running again. Nailed down another 1519 words and I'm gonna watch football for awhile. Short of my daily goal, but tomorrow's a new day. Very soon this thing's gonna break loose.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1519
Blog(s): 450

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813

December 15, 2014[edit]

Rolled out just after 1 a.m. Yay. Got through some emails, journal entries. Alison's post struck a particular chord. Here's more on that, with thanks to Alison.

You all know I believe that goal setting is extremely important. I don't have a day job, so logic would dictate that I should be able to write 6 hour per day (with a few minutes break every hour plus lunch) five days per week. (Forgive me for a moment while I digress… sigh… that would be 6,000 words per day, 30,000 words per week [a short novel] and 1,560,000 words per year.) But again, it's only 6 hours a day doing my job. I might get there someday—in fact, I *hope* to get there someday—but it takes time to build up to spending that many hours in the chair writing.

When a writer is just starting (whether for the first time or coming back after an absence), it takes a while to build up. One major key is physical comfort. (This is straight from my unintentional mentor, DWS, and as usual, he's spot on the money.) If you're gonna spend the hours in the chair, you need a comfortable chair, your 'puter at the right height, your wrists positioned comfortably, etc. There should be no pressure (or as little as possible) on any part of your body other than your fingertips as you type. Also he recommends taking a break about every hour to get up and move around. I'm still working on that one myself. And then it just takes some time to build up to spending more time in the chair.

Finally, every writer is different. Do what YOU do and don't worry about "shoulds." But yes, at least try to be comfortable while you're doing it.

I've been copy/pasting my blog posts from this blog to a Word document just to save it. Who knows… might wanna put it in a book someday. (It's just my stuff, not yours.) Since my first entry back on October 19 (so 56 days ago), I've written 37,727 words on just this. Kind'a sort'a wish all that had been fiction. (grin) Then again, maybe some of it was. Who knows….

To the writing….
Got about 1200 words done in two short sessions, then a good walk of 5.1 miles to clear cobwebs and stuff. (Alison, the distance doesn't matter except that I've gotten addicted. I just like to walk and I like to watch my numbers grow there too.) Then I came back and got some more writing done. Stopping now for NYPD Blue. Fairly decent day, and the story is flowing really well now.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3240
Blog(s): 461

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813
Day 5….. 3240 words. Total words to date……. 10053

December 16, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Got through some emails, a couple journal entries. Have a new Depth workshop session, but later.

Well, I piddled awhile, then caved and listened to the workshop. Probably a good workshop, but very little I didn't already know. This is what I get for not having enough confidence in the work I've achieved over the past forty years. Sometimes I take workshops I don't really need. The assignment this week interests me so I'll take it on. It's only a beginning of 300 words or so.

Had a fairly good walk in a new area but a little short at only 2.8 miles, then back to the writing 'puter. I'll try to get a really good walk tomorrow. Long. 'Cause why not.

To the writing….
Well, I nailed down another paltry 1130 words on the novel, then wrote an opening of 426 words to send to DWS for homework. I really liked the premise and the opening, thought, so after I'd sent that off, I wound up turning the opening into the short story for this week. It will be posted soon. I hope you'll wanna go check it out. It's a good'n. Kind'a twisty turny but I think it's Nick Porter maybe.

Stopping now for NYPD Blue. Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4096 (1130 novel, 2966 Saving the Baby, story of the week)
Blog(s): 289

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813

Day 5..... 3240 words. Total words to date..... 10053
Day 6..... 1130 words. Total words to date..... 11183

Total fiction words for the month..... 42,306

December 17, 2014[edit]

Up late (for me) last night creating a cover for the story of the week ("Saving the Baby," I really hope you'll check it out while it's free), then posting the story and the cover to the site, then publishing it to Smashwords and Amazon. So I got to bed late and slept in this morning.

Rolled out right at 3, got right to emails, answered a few, then remembered I had to update all the vendor pages on my author website (Amazon, Apple, B&N and Smashwords) with the story from yesterday. So a lot of non-writing admin stuff to start the day. (shrug) It's gotta be done but a half-hour to an hour once a week isn't too bad. So I got that done, then came here to do this. Now back to finish email and comment on a couple journal entries.

Great DWS blog today regarding the nature of ebooks. Unlike print books, they are streaming entertainment. Nothing more. I encourage you to read the article. Go to http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/#sthash.3FnmZiCs.dpuf and then scroll down to (or do Edit > Find) the Topic of the Night: A Rude Awakening Coming (Maybe).

To the writing....
This process never ceases to amaze me. I was actually on the verge of deciding this would be a novella (10,000 to 19,999 words) to end the series and call it done. Then I jumped Wes forward to a new scene. This is one of those places where it wasn't necessary seeing him get from here to there, but only knowing he had arrived. In the new scene, he (Wes) came to life again, began talking with people, learning things. And about 10 new storylines popped out. I suspect from here on out it will be a race to the finish, and there's no telling where the finish line will be. (grin)

Stopping now for NYPD Blue. Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2082
Blog(s): 384

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1..... 2846 words. Total words to date..... 2846
Day 2..... 3102 words. Total words to date..... 5948
Day 3..... 2290 words. Total words to date..... 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4..... 1519 words. Total words to date..... 6813
Day 5..... 3240 words. Total words to date..... 10053
Day 6..... 1130 words. Total words to date..... 11183
Day 7..... 2082 words. Total words to date..... 13265

Total fiction words for the month..... 44388

December 18, 2014[edit]

Up late (for me) again last night watching the Patrick Stewart version of *A Christmas Carol*. Didn't care for it. My favorite remains the 1970 musical version (*Scrooge*) with Albert Finney. Anyway...

Rolled out right a little after 2, got right to emails, answered a few, deleted a lot. Replied to a couple of journal entries. Ahh, different strokes... had a lot of fun with the journal entries and they sparked some

good stuff. (Please don't take offense.)

My buddy Alison likes rain; I don't because if I'm caught out in it I'll wither away and die and my little pink booties will curl up and a house will fall on me and a bunch of very short, very round people will cheer. (See? Wasn't that fun?)

And then my buddy Ann, talking about her quilting project, wrote "[It] would go faster if I didn't keep redesigning it," which of course sounded to me like her subconscious slapping us around a little re out writing, which also might go faster if we didn't keep redesigning it, don'tchaknow. (grin) Seriously, it's a great reminder, so Thanks, Ann's Subconscious! (grin)

Hey, I ain't talkin' out of school here. I get stuck. If you remember, just yesterday I was ready to throw in the towel on Wes 3. I was gonna either slap an end on it and call it a novella or just stop writing it until I figured out where it was going. And therein lay the battle: if I'm trusting my subconscious, I don't even WANT to know where it's going. But sometimes I slip. Remember, I've only been at this Writing Into the Dark stuff since April.

(By the way, if you want to learn WITD from the master himself, DWS is now offering a video lecture on it for only $50. I don't doubt for an instant it's an excellent value. You can see info about it at http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lecture-series/. Scroll WAY down to Lecture 24.)

So anyway, I don't WANT to know where my story's going when I'm writing. When I have no clue where the story's going, it and I are 8 or 10 years old, fresh and alive and laughing and racing through the woods naked And It's FUN.

But when I have the story all planned out or when I otherwise keep forcing it, the story is trudging through the woods before me at the point of my Almighty Writer's sword, its hands cuffed behind its back, a prisoner of my conscious, critical mind. And oh yes, it WILL damned sure do what I tell it to do or else. Sigh… yep, might as well stop, make it dig its own grave, and then run it through with the sword to bring the misery to an end for both of us, because for me, that's when writing IS drudgery.

Okay, scribbled the above, then thought this would be a great topic to use to berate the general public so I popped over to my big blog and wrote one there too. It's generally the same, so if you're signed up for that one too, around March 20, 2015 you're gonna experience an overwhelming sense of deja vu. (grin)

A friend who read my short story "Saving the Baby" said her heart raced through it but reminded me she had no idea what a 105mm round looks like. Duh. Didn't think of that. 105mm is the width. It's just over 4″ wide, and the bullet is about 20″ long. Weighs about 20 pounds. Can't say more or I'll ruin the story.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2352
Blog(s): 631

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813
Day 5….. 3240 words. Total words to date……. 10053
Day 6….. 1130 words. Total words to date……. 11183
Day 7….. 2082 words. Total words to date……. 13265
Day 8….. 2352 words. Total words to date……. 15617

Total fiction words for the month..... 46,740

December 19, 2014[edit]

Rolled out just before 2, got right to emails and journal entries.

One of the websites I created for a client was down, so I spent time talking with a tech at my hosting site. Not conducive to writing. Sigh... life stuff. Okay, situation resolved. Almost 3.5 hours gone. Crap. Three and a half hours, no income, no fun, no joy. Ugh. See why I no longer work for other people?

To the writing.....
Not a lot done today. It keeps threatening to break loose, but it just hasn't yet. It will.

I was thinking today of all I've learned about writing in the past few months. Amazing. One of the biggies very recently is that I always thought writing series would be easier somehow than writing one-offs. Even DWS thinks they're easier. After all, the "world" is there, the main characters are set, etc.

But for me, that's what makes writing series something less than a good thing. I feel bound by the characters, unable to just let them go sometimes, and that can't be good. I have a kind of explosive personality. I share it with two of my personas as well. Not an easy thing to rein-in, especially when a main character keeps wanting to be bigger than life, but in a very constrained, within-himself kind of way.

Okay, enough whining. Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1288
Blog(s): 316

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1..... 2846 words. Total words to date..... 2846
Day 2..... 3102 words. Total words to date..... 5948
Day 3..... 2290 words. Total words to date..... 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4..... 1519 words. Total words to date..... 6813
Day 5..... 3240 words. Total words to date..... 10053
Day 6..... 1130 words. Total words to date..... 11183
Day 7..... 2082 words. Total words to date..... 13265
Day 8..... 2352 words. Total words to date..... 15617
Day 9..... 1288 words. Total words to date..... 16905

Total fiction words for the month..... 48,028

December 20, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 1 a.m., very few emails and only Alison's journal entry.

One of the great things about this little journal is that it's honest. We post what we write or why we didn't. It's interesting to see that accomplished novelists like Alison and Dawn struggle with some of the same issues the rest of us face.

I'm aware more and more often of my comfort zones, those places into which my critical mind guides me to keep me from writing. Some of my non-writing comfort zones are

- non-writing, non-creative things like doing chores or searching for cover art or reading the history

of Guerrero, Mexico;
- non-writing, creative things like creating covers; and
- writing-related creative things like writing this and other blog posts.

And then there are my writing comfort zones, for example,

- staying with my western series instead of stretching into the SF novella or novel (yep, two of them) I have in the wings;
- always writing a certain length (around 40,000 words) instead of going to novella or long novel lengths.

When I fall back onto my need to write a short story every week to keep my streak going, I experience a sense of relief because I can get away from my novel for awhile. How nuts is that? Both should be fun. The saving grace here is to remember that a year ago, I had to force myself to write a short story. Now that's what I run to for solace. I want to run to the next novel and the next and the next. Time to set some goals for 2015. And then stick to them. That's coming up in the next few days.

A side note: If ANY of you are still considering going with a traditional publisher, PLEASE read Kris Rusch's What Traditional Publishing Learned in 2014. It's long, but it's absolutely eye opening, and chilling. I would NEVER go back to traditional publishing. (Kristine Kathryn Rusch is an incredibly successful long-term professional fiction writer.)

To the writing.....
Well, I was stuck again. One way to get unstuck is to backtrack to see whether maybe the story took a wrong turn somewhere. Often, this will be in a place where I forced the character to do or say something that he didn't want to do or say. Sure enough, this was no exception. I found the place where I (the writer) was poking through the story. Sigh. Happens. So I began the day with about ten minutes of reading. Then I threw out 2209 words. My revised beginning word count for today is 14,696.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1841
Blog(s): 509

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1..... 2846 words. Total words to date..... 2846
Day 2..... 3102 words. Total words to date..... 5948
Day 3..... 2290 words. Total words to date..... 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4..... 1519 words. Total words to date..... 6813
Day 5..... 3240 words. Total words to date..... 10053
Day 6..... 1130 words. Total words to date..... 11183
Day 7..... 2082 words. Total words to date..... 13265
Day 8..... 2352 words. Total words to date..... 15617
Day 9..... 1288 words. Total words to date..... 16905 (-2209 = 14696 revised)
Day 10.. 1841 words. Total words to date..... 16537

Total fiction words for the month..... 49,869

December 21, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 1 a.m. again, very few emails.

My numbers for today turned out MUCH different than I thought they were going to. I added to this blog post off and on all day. Read it if you want or skip it. This is mostly for my own record but it might give you a few chuckles. I indented the numbers stuff and the whining.

> I've been battling my critical mind taking over my time. Maybe it's the weather, whatever, but I suspect it's just me. I allow other things to happen and then I make excuses for them. Hey, if doing other things keeps me busy and happy, then I guess that's okay, but mostly they don't. Mostly when I'm not writing, I'm just bored, literally wasting minutes and hours off my life. When I'm in my house, pretty much the only time I'm really enjoying myself is when I'm watching NYPD Blue or when I'm writing. Whatever. It is what it is.
>
> I decided to do a different kind of schedule to see where my time goes. You can read this or not. It's number intensive, but I'm putting it here mostly so I can refer back to it in the future. (I save all these in a Word document.)
>
> In one week there are 7 days. That's 168 hours or 10,080 minutes. Let's start there.
>
> I can enjoy watching a football game if I really like or despise one of the teams. That's 3 hours usually twice a week. I do enjoy watching NYPD Blue. (That's 45 minutes per day, no commercials, usually 5 days per week, but I'm counting it as an hour.) Every now and then a movie will be on that I want to watch, but they usually run too late with me working the early morning shift so I'm just not counting those at all. Besides, when I do watch one it comes out of my DBTV (dead-brain TV) or sleep time, so it's already included.
>
> Okay, so football and NYPD Blue… that's 11 hours of TV per week that I actually enjoy. Then I usually watch 2 hours per night of some of the mind-numbing crap that passes for situation comedy. (Can we talk about laugh tracks here for a moment? Folks, when a show depends on canned laughter, it's because The Writing Sucks. Okay, so I do that while I'm eating supper and winding down to go to bed. Okay, so all told that's 21 hours per week of either good or "fine, whatever, I give up" TV.
>
> I also sleep seven hours or less per night. Unlike most people, I do NOT see that as a good thing. I *hate* sleeping, and I'm fully aware of all the connotations evoked by the intentional use of the verb "hate." I despise sleep and the need for it. Sleep is anti-alive time. If you like to sleep or relish it or love it or whatever, that's fine. I don't care. It's still anti-alive time when things are going on all over the world and you can't be aware.
>
> I mean, you're sleepin' and somebody comes in and just knocks you off, what happens? Nothing. You just never wake up. You keep doing the same thing you were already doing, only now it has no end. I mean seriously, if you enjoy sleeping, death should make you ecstatic. Just sayin'.
>
> Okay, so that's 49 hours or less per week spent in a coma. The rest of the time is mine. Yes, I eat, but that's included either in the TV time above or at my desk.
>
> So let's do a quick so-far summary. Out of 168 hours per week, 11 are spent on non-writing time that I actually enjoy. That leaves 157. Sleep, the little death-practice session, sucks up another 49 hours. That leaves 108. And DBTV siphons off another 10 hours, leaving 98. Divide that by 7 and that leaves 14 hours per day that are my own. Here, I'll even chunk away the weekends (two days of 14 hours each) since they aren't really strictly completely or even at all my own. (Note to self: Whatever you need to tell yourself there, Harv, but you are NOT tossing out weekends as writing days.) That pares the 98 hours down to 70. So five days per week, 14 hours per day are my own. That's 840 minutes per day. Okay, so from here on down I'll focus on daily stuff.
>
> Of course, I have to figure in health & necessity breaks of about 15 minutes every hour. Great. Okay.

So out of 14 hours (840 minutes) I have to pretty much automatically toss aside twelve 15-minute periods for breaks (fix coffee, bathroom break, grab a snack, feed the kittens and the Chihuahua etc.). That's 180 minutes, or 3 hours. Ugh. So now I'm down to 11 hours per day (660 minutes).

I write 800 to 1000 error-free, publishable words per hour. (Still haven't figured out why I'm so slow, given that I can type 60 error-free words per minute. Numbers being numbers, that should equate to 3600 words per hour, yet somehow I'm proud of being able to put a paltry 1000 words per hour on the page.)

So even using the *low* end of 800 words per hour, having pared down my available, no-excuses writing time to 11 hours per day 5 days per week, I should be able to put 8800 words on the page per day, or 44,000 words on the page per five-day week. Yeah right.

But why can't I?

Because I Find Excuses Not To. Period.

Yes, I know there are other things I absolutely have to do. For example, if I want my stories to actually be published, I have to create covers and, you know, publish them. But most of the time, I'm doing crap (trying hard to watch my language here) that I just don't have to do. Spider Solitaire. Writing long, inane blog posts like this one. Poking myself in the eye with my finger because it's just really cool that it's so easy to touch part of my brain with my finger. You know, crap.

But again, this really is black and white for me: Either I enjoy writing or I don't.

If I enjoy writing, I should Just Write at every opportunity. I should find excuses TO write, not excuses NOT to write.

And if I don't enjoy writing, then I should quit all this foolishness and find something to do that I DO enjoy. I could be taking long walks on the beach or praying for world peace or parking alongside a busy highway in my white pickup and pointing a hair dryer at cars as they go by. Whatever.

Okay, there went another three hours I'll never get back (see how well excuses work?), writing the above and laboring through reading a "notable quotes" email I receive once a week or so and then verifying my monthly numbers thus far on my little ancient calculator. The calculator just before the one I use now was an abacus.

To the writing.....

Sigh... started by cutting another 132 words... seriously, if this thing doesn't bust loose soon, I might just set it aside and go on to something else. (Yeah, I wrote that, and then the stuff below happened.)

Okay, cool. I knocked out 2557 words today in a few sessions intermingled with half a boatload of other stuff AND I was able to leave a really jagged edge so the writing should start well tomorrow. Have to admit I'll be glad when this one's over. I started with a Texas Ranger. Well, he's no longer a Ranger, and now I think he's about to take a job on a fishing boat for a small fleet in a village in Mexico. How do I explain that to readers who like a good western?

Of course, he IS still Wes Crowley and the basic theme remains a normal man doing larger-than-life things in wide open spaces in a hostile environment and overcoming whatever's tossed at him. Still, after this one maybe I can start working toward that 11,000 words per day, eh?

Okay, after writing all that stuff up there (whine, whine, whine) I wrote another 1573 words in two session

and STILL left a good ragged edge. Should be able to jump right back into the story in the morning. At long last, I think this one has broken loose.

Gonna stay up to watch a ball game tonight, so I might sleep-in tomorrow. Back in the morning some time. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4130 (stop laughing, Dawn… this is a really good writing day for me)
Blog(s): 1531 (man, I kind'a sort'a wish this had been all fiction too… 5661? are you kiddin' me?)

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813
Day 5….. 3240 words. Total words to date……. 10053
Day 6….. 1130 words. Total words to date……. 11183
Day 7….. 2082 words. Total words to date……. 13265
Day 8….. 2352 words. Total words to date……. 15617
Day 9….. 1288 words. Total words to date……. 16905 (-2209 = 14696 revised)
Day 10.. 1841 words. Total words to date…….. 16537
Day 11.. 4130 words. Total words to date…….. 20667

Total fiction words for the month……. 53,999 (Seriously? I couldn't write one more lousy word?)

December 22, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little after 2 a.m. Again, very few emails.

I worked for a while on a note regarding this journal, its primary and secondary purposes, the myths we've all learned and ways to overcome them, etc. Then something I wrote in that spurred a thought that I wanted to be sure to include in the Writing the Character-Driven Story intensive, so I switched over to that for just a little while. I worked on the handout, put together a few examples, and so on. (One of the examples might end up being a short story. Weird how that happens.) Anyway, incredible how quickly two hours can fly by.

Oh, if you don't know enough about copyright and if you want to learn what's true and what isn't, DWS recommends The Copyright Handbook from NoLo Press. You can find it here: http://www.nolo.com/products/the-copyright-handbook-coha.html.

To the writing…..

At long last, I think this one has broken loose. No breakdown of numbers today. Just feels great to be writing again. I'm getting closer every day to being able to write for an hour, then stop for about 10 minutes, then write for another hour.

This is something else DWS advocates and I believe it's very wise, so I've been practicing it for awhile. The problem for me hasn't been taking a break now and then. The problem for me has been sitting back down and writing when the break's over. That's getting better now. At Last!

The lesson for me from all this, the key phrase(s) to remember?

Write the next scene.
Write the next sentence.

Keep the story moving forward.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3128
Blog(s): 378

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1..... 2846 words. Total words to date..... 2846
Day 2..... 3102 words. Total words to date..... 5948
Day 3..... 2290 words. Total words to date..... 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4..... 1519 words. Total words to date..... 6813
Day 5..... 3240 words. Total words to date..... 10053
Day 6..... 1130 words. Total words to date..... 11183
Day 7..... 2082 words. Total words to date..... 13265
Day 8..... 2352 words. Total words to date..... 15617
Day 9..... 1288 words. Total words to date..... 16905 (-2209 = 14696 revised)
Day 10.. 1841 words. Total words to date..... 16537
Day 11.. 4130 words. Total words to date..... 20667
Day 12.. 3128 words. Total words to date..... 23795

Total fiction words for the month..... 57,127

December 24, 2014[edit]

First, welcome to Candy Terry, finally. (grin) She will be posting to the journal when she feels ready. So again, please feel free to make a circle and stare at her.

Okay, caught up on my sleep a bit last night and rolled out about 2:30 a.m.

Just a quick reminder... as you've all heard me say before at one time or another, if someone's teaching a technique or concept about writing and if he can't provide examples and/or explain it to your satisfaction, no matter who the instructor is (even me), don't feel that you have to accept it.

Been screwing around with email and other stuff for 2.5 hours. Before I work on the novel today, I'm gonna get to the next story of the week. That's a goal, and for me goals take precedence. And Alison Holt gave me the perfect example to explain why. Earlier, on her post from December 23, Alison and I were talking a little bit about critical mind, how it can fool you into doing ANYTHING other than writing. Her critical mind had tricked her into counting the number of times she'd used a particular word.

Now most often, when your critical mind cons you into not writing, it's a function of fear. After all, if you Just Write, you'll finish. If you finish, you'll publish, and if you publish somebody might not like your work. And you KNOW what'll happen if nobody likes your work, right? Ahem... Nothing. Absolutely nothing. So if you find a way to get rid of the fear, then you find a way to keep your critical mind from ever getting the upper hand.

One way you can do that is to Trade Fears. Consider this my Christmas gift to you:

I used to be scared to death of actually writing and publishing a short story. Partly to help me get over that idiocy, I challenged myself to write a new short story every week. Not only that, but I decided to hold myself accountable by publishing that short story online for the whole world to see. I created a website so I could make a fool of myself in public, and I started. Know what I'm afraid of now, eight very short months later? I *still* encounter the fear of writing a short story sometimes, but I'm a lot *more* afraid my

streak will end.

See? I traded the fear of writing a short story for the fear of NOT writing a short story and killing my streak. And yes, it really is just that easy.

It doesn't have to be anything as dramatic as writing a short story every week. You can create a streak with any recurring goal that automatically resets. Maybe you can choose to write 1000 word per day, period, no matter what else is happening. Or 750 words per day. Or 500 words per day. Whatever.

Earlier in this post I said I had to write my short story for this week and that would take precedence over writing on my novel. And I said it would take precedence because it's a goal, and goals take precedence. Now you know why. Because this particular goal also is part of a streak, and Streaks Have Power. Once you get a streak going, you'll do pretty much anything to keep it going. (grin)

Okay, so way back on April 16 I said I was going to write one short story per week for a year. So far I haven't missed a week, and in some weeks I wrote more than one. In the 36 week period that ends tomorrow morning (December 25) at 9 a.m., I've written 43 new short stories. (I finished this week's story about an hour ago as I write this.)

See how powerful streaks can be? And just think… this is the perfect time of year to set new realistic (repeating) goals. Try it. You'll like it.

To the writing…..
All done with "The Stipplesuit," the short story of the week. Woohoo! Okay, after I wrote the story and created the cover, I published it to HEStanbrough.com and Smashwords and Amazon, then came here to write the stuff above about dealing with critical mind. Now, finally, back to the novel. Gonna be a great day for word count. (grin)

Well, I got some done but not as much as I'd have liked. Still, not too bad, especially considering I'm still under the weather. Didn't even walk today. You all have a wonderful Christmas (no matter what your belief system, tomorrow is still Christmas day) and I'll hope to see some of you in the new year if not sooner. Hugs to all of you, even Dawn if I can just remember that step stool I'm always threatening her with.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. If I happen to see Santa making his rounds, I'll tell him you've all been good little boys and girls. (grin) Here are my numbers *para este* one *dia*… sorry… been hanging out with Wes in a cantina in Mexico……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4033
Blog(s): 943

Writing of "The Stipplesuit" (short story of the week)……. 3028

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813
Day 5….. 3240 words. Total words to date……. 10053
Day 6….. 1130 words. Total words to date……. 11183
Day 7….. 2082 words. Total words to date……. 13265
Day 8….. 2352 words. Total words to date……. 15617
Day 9….. 1288 words. Total words to date……. 16905 (-2209 = 14696 revised)

Day 10… 1841 words. Total words to date……. 16537
Day 11… 4130 words. Total words to date……. 20667
Day 12… 3128 words. Total words to date……. 23795
Day 13… 1012 words. Total words to date……. 24807
Day 14… 1005 words. Total words to date……. 25812

Total fiction words for the month…… 61,160

December 25, 2014[edit]

Wow, guess I really caught up on my sleep last night. I didn't get up until a few minutes after 4 a.m. There went at least two hours of writing time. Ugh.

I do wish all of you a merry Christmas, whatever that means to you. For me it would mean a day of writing, preferably at least 4000 words. (grin) However, probably this is going to be an unintentional day off for me. We'll see.

With all the talk yesterday about streaks, I'm thinking of switching my Story of the Week goal from Thursday to Monday. To do that, I have to write one extra story and post it on a Monday after I've already posted one on Thursday. (If I skip a Thursday to get to the following Monday, I break my streak.) So again, we'll see.

If any of you want to set some recurring goals to set up a streak for yourself, and if you want to talk with me about that, I'd be more than happy to advise or help in any other way I can. Just email me.

To the writing…..
No writing for today. It's almost nine now, and I see that it's going to be a full day off from writing. Just posting this, then going back to watching some good movies. Already saw The Sting, and around 9 will begin The Color of Money, the sequel to The Hustler.

By the way, just to avoid any confusion, in my writing word count I include only writing days, so when I come back tomorrow, that will be Day 16 even though yesterday was Day 15.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX
Blog(s): XXX

Total on South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)…… 25,812 words

Total fiction words for December 2014 thus far…… 61,160

December 26, 2014[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30, though I pretty much had to force myself. No writing, no walking, just mostly sitting around watching movies all day yesterday absolutely exhausted me. Ugh. Things should be back to normal today, I hope.

Yesterday I briefly mentioned goal setting. In the meantime, DWS posted the first of a two-part series on goal setting here: http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-world-of-publishing-failure-must-be-an-option/. Some good stuff there, especially on recognizing failure as an option in publishing. If you'd rather just talk with me about setting goals or eliminating fears (or if you want to read DWS and talk with me),

you're always welcome. He and I often say things very differently.

If you are one who occasionally refers others to my online lectures on writing, I've revised some things. Primarily, I've taken down the Writing Into the Dark lecture. It was too far reaching and general. I plan to revise it and break it into three or four other, more focused lectures.

I've also decided to switch my Story of the Week goal from Thursday to Monday. I plan to do that this Monday, so those of you who are signed up for my short story every week should see a brand new story in your email inbox on Monday. Caveat: the novel is running really well right now, so if I *don't* make the switch this Monday, there will be a new story in your inbox this Thursday and then another one the following Monday. This is WHES coming to you live from downtown Saint David, Arizona, hedging his bets at every turn. (grin)

Two hours gone as I write this so time to get to the writing.

To the writing.....
Over the day I've gotten in a few good hours of writing. Cycled back on a few things too, but that didn't take a lot of time. Cycling is such a cool process because it's all in creative mind. Anyway, I think I'm not quite on the home stretch with the novel but I'm on the turn coming into the home stretch. Not really a good writing day, but a good-enough writing day.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3124
Blog(s): 499

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1..... 2846 words. Total words to date..... 2846
Day 2..... 3102 words. Total words to date..... 5948
Day 3..... 2290 words. Total words to date..... 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4..... 1519 words. Total words to date..... 6813
Day 5..... 3240 words. Total words to date..... 10053
Day 6..... 1130 words. Total words to date..... 11183
Day 7..... 2082 words. Total words to date..... 13265
Day 8..... 2352 words. Total words to date..... 15617
Day 9..... 1288 words. Total words to date..... 16905 (-2209 = 14696 revised)
Day 10... 1841 words. Total words to date..... 16537
Day 11... 4130 words. Total words to date..... 20667
Day 12... 3128 words. Total words to date..... 23795
Day 13... 1012 words. Total words to date..... 24807
Day 14... 1005 words. Total words to date..... 25812
Day 15... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 28936

Total fiction words for the month..... 62,268 (Adjusted down a bit. Rechecked my addition.)

December 27, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Answered a few emails and one journal entry, then here.

I've decided to switch my Story of the Week goal from Thursday to Monday. I plan to do that this Monday, so those of you who are signed up for my short story every week, you'll see something brand new in your email inbox on Monday. If I don't pull it off, then I'll make the switch next week. (There will be a story Thursday, and then the switch-over story the following Monday.)

If any of you have been considering taking any of DWS online workshops, here's my final tally:

- **Ideas to Story:** If you have trouble coming up with ideas, this is a fairly good workshop but I can't recommend it as having been worth the money I paid for it.
- **How to Write Science Fiction:** If you're interested at all in writing SF, I strongly recommend this workshop. I found it well worth the money. However, although it's touted as being good for those who want to write fantasy, I do not recommend it in that regard.
- **Productivity:** I recommend this workshop but not for anyone in my immediate group. (Update: Productivity is now available as a Classic Workshop, meaning it costs only $150. If you'd like to increase your productivity as a writer, I recommend it.)
- **Depth in Writing:** I still have two weeks to go on this workshop, but at this point I can safely say it has not been worth the money.
    1. The concept (getting more depth in scenes and characters) was taught in a vacuum rather than in the context of writing the overall story or novel. When I asked a question about using italics to indicate unspoken thought, I was told that was an "advanced technique" that I would have "zero chance of understanding" until I'd written at least a million words. (Seriously?)
    2. Surprisingly, the instructor also passed along to me some information that I was fortunate to recognize as erroneous. A person who hadn't been writing as long might not have recognized it, and that was annoying.
    3. In one of those instances of erroneous information, to give the instructor the benefit of the doubt, I emailed privately (so as not to bring it up in public) to ask for an example of a particular technique in 3rd person rather than 1st person. Instead of simply providing me with an example, the instructor became harshly and personally critical, to the point of asking whether I even know what a narrator is in fiction. That was a third strike, and it was a big one. You all know my rule regarding receiving instruction from anyone who can't or won't provide examples and explanations. To me, that's what proves the instructor knows his topic.

So to summarize, the SF workshop was good and was worth the $300. The others… well, I'm sorry to say that in my opinion they were worth neither the money nor the time.

Of the DWS Video Lectures, you can find the full text of most of them in the Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing tab or in the Think Like a Publisher tab (both free) on his website. In particular for the people in this group, I strongly recommend reading How to Get Your Indie Books into Bookstores. (I spent $50 on the lecture before I found this, and it's exactly the same thing.)

To the writing…..
Well, today was a very good day. I wrote some words and I finished the novel at about 10,000 words short of the others. It ended where it should have ended, and if you're an aficionado of Wes Crowley, I think you'll be happy for him. Now I have to figure out what I'm gonna do tomorrow.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2313
Blog(s): 681

Writing of South to Mexico (new Wes Crowley novel)
Day 1….. 2846 words. Total words to date……. 2846
Day 2….. 3102 words. Total words to date……. 5948
Day 3….. 2290 words. Total words to date……. 5294 (adjusted)
Day 4….. 1519 words. Total words to date……. 6813
Day 5….. 3240 words. Total words to date……. 10053
Day 6….. 1130 words. Total words to date……. 11183
Day 7….. 2082 words. Total words to date……. 13265
Day 8….. 2352 words. Total words to date……. 15617

Day 9..... 1288 words. Total words to date..... 16905 (-2209 = 14696 revised)
Day 10... 1841 words. Total words to date..... 16537
Day 11... 4130 words. Total words to date..... 20667
Day 12... 3128 words. Total words to date..... 23795
Day 13... 1012 words. Total words to date..... 24807
Day 14... 1005 words. Total words to date..... 25812
Day 15... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 28936
Day 16... 2313 words. Total words to date..... 31,249 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 64,581

December 28, 2014[edit]

Rolled out a little late at 2:45. Answered a few emails and one journal entry, then here.

Even if you think you don't need it, I recommend you go read the article at the end of this paragraph, ESPECIALLY the comments. If you don't plan to read the comments, it might still be worthwhile but the comments are as informative as the main post. It'll take a half-hour to an hour, but it will help you: http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/killing-the-top-ten-sacred-covers-of-publishing-3-rewriting/

Preparatory to setting some new goals for 2015, I looked back at goals I set in early October of this year:

- Write a Daily Blog to hold myself accountable. (Done)
- Continue writing a short story every week. (Shrug. Okay. Might need to reset this one.)
- Write and publish my first novel before the end of the year.

Let's look at that last goal for a moment. I began writing Leaving Amarillo on October 25 and at that time adjusted my goal to finish it by December 8, forty-five days later. (I write about 1,000 words of publishable fiction per hour. I figured on two hours of writing per day and gave myself 30 days to write a novel, then added half that time to the end to give myself a buffer in case of illness, life, etc. That's how I arrived at the 45 days.)

I finished Leaving Amarillo on November 9... 15 days later. Some folks would say "Well, sure, but it was only a 40,000 word novel." True. However, I finished the second novel in the series, Longing for Mexico, on December 7, one day before my original deadline for the first novel (so 44 days out), and those two combined were 83,639 words.

As I write this, I finished and published the third novel in the series yesterday, December 27, exactly 63 days from the day I started the first novel. So just on novels (not counting short stories yet), in that 63 days I wrote and published 114,888 new words of fiction.

During that same period I wrote 8 new short stories comprising 28,670 words. So my total word count for that 63 days is 143,558. Score! (That's an average daily word count of 2278 words per day for 63 days, so I think my daily word count goal is good where it is.)

Note: Had I not found and decided to doggedly follow Heinlein's Rules, I probably would have written ZERO words of fiction. I'm no math expert, but zero seems like a lot less than 143,558.

How did this happen? It all started with me setting a realistic goal, the 45 days to write a novel as described above. Just Making That Decision was so freeing that during the 45 days, I actually wrote two novels, while not missing on my goal of writing a new short story every week. So that's the upshot:

Give yourself permission to Just Write. Dare to be bad. Follow Heinlein's Rules. Set some goals and see what happens.

I recommend you set at least one recurring goal (one that resets once per day or per week or per month or perhaps), at least one "big" goal, whatever that might be for you, and one overall goal for the year.

I invite everyone to post their goals here, on this blog, not for me or others, but for yourself, to see it in print, to help hold you accountable to yourself. That's all I'm doing on here, holding myself accountable to myself. If you guys get something out of it too, that's gravy. (grin)

Just a quick final note: Remember that a "goal" is something over which you have complete control. If you want something that is out of your control, that is a dream. So "I will write and indie publish a novel before March 30″ is a goal. "I will write a new short story every week" is a goal. But "I will earn at least $500 on my fiction this month (or year)" is a dream. You have no control over how many copies sell.

Now, I've enjoyed this bit of down time and if you've stayed with me thus far, thanks, but now…

To the writing……

Off and on, wrote some fiction, hit the treadmill for a bit (I don't do well on the treader-thingy but it's just too stinkin' cold to walk outside), then back to writing. Back and forth a few times like that to the word count you see below. Today is a blah day so I'll take it.

I hoped to have a story of the week done today for posting tomorrow, but that ain't gonna happen. I'm pooped and I still have a few non-writing things to do today so I'll make the transition on the story of the week from Thursday to Monday next week.

In between treadmillering and writing, occasionally I took a break and created a new page on HEStanbrough.com for South to Mexico, then revised the Novels page on the same website, adding small covers (same as the pages for short stories and collections). Now if you click on a cover on the Novels page, it will take you to the specific page for that book. Oh, if any of you would like to read an excerpt (about 2,000 words) from South to Mexico, visit the page.

After I post this, I'll develop the ebook and print covers today for Wes Crowley: The Trilogy. I'll publish all three novels in that one, though I'm not sure yet when. Knowing me, probably sooner rather than later. And I need to finish putting together the intensive on Writing the Character-Driven Story over the next few days. And work on those goals.

Since my nonfiction sells really well, I'll be including some nonfiction goals in my new year as well.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2442
Blog(s): 959

Total fiction words for the month…… 67,023

December 29, 2014[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries and comments.

Conducted a digital proof on South to Mexico. After that I worked a bit on setting goals for 2015

(seriously? shouldn't it still be about 1978?) then came here.

Okay, this is for everyone else out there. Dawn always orders a print copy to proof. That's an excellent way to proof your book. If you can do it, I recommend it. However, I use the on-site digital proofer instead of ordering a print copy (or even downloading a PDF). That works for me.

If I used Dawn's technique, I'd have to have someone else proof it for me. I wrote it and I thoroughly enjoyed the story, but I don't want to read it again. Will there be typos? Maybe a couple. But before it goes to the printer, I've run the contextual spell checker and my first reader has read it. I've corrected any problems I've found as a result of those two passes. Sometimes I even go back and read it (or parts of it) aloud to check for rhythm, etc. But once it's gone to the printer, for me personally I have to let go.

So why do I use the digital proofer at all? I use it to scan the layout at a distance. I'm not seeing words but design. I intentionally keep the thing zoomed out so the blocks of text are illisible. (Ain't that a cool word?) I'm looking for widows, orphans, rivers of white running through the text, excessive white space and any other apparent patterns that might annoy a reader.

The layout-proofing process of this 136 page book took me about ten minutes, and I found one change I want to make. So I'll order a few copies later today or tomorrow.

Yesterday I reported on what I'd accomplished in the past 63 days. Writing overall fiction (novels and short stories), my average was 2278 words per day. I'm very happy with that figure.

So I've already decided on one personal goal for 2015: 3000 new words of fiction per day.

This is a perfect goal for me because it's attainable, but it isn't easily attainable. During the 63 day period I met or exceeded this goal 22 times. Shooting for fewer words per day would be too easy and would cause me to actually lower my word count. Shooting for more would give me a sense that it's all right to not quite reach my goal. I want a goal that I know I can reach but I have to strive a bit to get there. If I pull this off, that's 21,000 words per week. At year's end I will have written 1,092,000 words. A million words in a year? Yeah, that'll do just fine. (grin)

If you'd like a great deal more on Goal Setting, Dean Wesley Smith (according to his post today) is going to do the next two posts on goal setting. I recommend you read them. The first one should be up on the morning of 12/30 at http://deanwesleysmith.com. (When you get there, you'll have to scroll down to Writing in Public: Year 2, Month 5, Day 29.)

To the writing.....

Just finished the story of the week. Ton of fun!

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers.....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2680
Blog(s): 577

Writing of Story of the Week, "The Baby"
Day 1..... 2442 words. Total words to date..... 2442
Day 2..... 2680 words. Total words to date..... 5122 (Done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 69,703

December 30, 2014[edit]

Rolled out shortly after 1. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries and comments.

Attended Week 5 of the Depth in Writing workshop. In the midst of that got an email from CreateSpace that the proof for South to Mexico was ready. Proofed it (again, only digital as I outlined yesterday) and ordered a few copies, then returned to the workshop. Finished that up and came here.

I'm taking an intentional day off today from writing fiction, so I'm posting this early. My head is bubbling over with ideas, but there are some non-writing things I have to get done, so I'm gonna do those now. Then tomorrow I'll surpass 70,000 words for the month (average 2258 words per day) and call it good. (grin)

Non-writing stuff for today… At Least compile the Wes Crowley Trilogy, finish the cover, get that up. Post the new story I wrote yesterday to the website, update all the vendor pages, maybe some other business-end web design stuff on my sites. Also a little more work to polish off the handout for Writing the Character-Driven Story. That's a writing intensive, so there won't be a lot to the handout, but I want to make sure I mention what I want to mention and cover what I mention as thoroughly as I can. You who are coming to that, BRING YOUR LAPTOPS PLEASE.

A note on novel writing and series… As I wrote the Wes Crowley novels I realized fairly early that Wes isn't a good type to be a recurring main character. I like Wes a lot, but you can only have so many shootouts, so many Indian attacks, etc., especially since he lived as the "old west" was passing away and modern times were closing fast.

In South to Mexico (my personal favorite of the series), the conflicts become more psychological, inward conflicts than shoot'em ups, and that's fine. But once those are solved, what then? I tried for over a month to put Wes on a fishing boat in Mexico and thereby extend the story. (It's completely natural: he'd trade the wide-open spaces and man against the elements of the west for the wide-open spaces and man against the elements of the sea.)

There was only one problem. As much as I (Harvey) would LOVE to take to the sea in a small commercial fishing boat every morning and come home every night, Wes… well, frankly, Wes abhorred the idea. So no fishing for Wes. In fact, his new brother in law eagerly took over the role of fisherman. So there. And Wes? Well, fishing maybe, but not on a 40-foot boat in pitching seas with water washing over the side. Sigh.

My beloved buddy Wes was just too limited as a character. If he'd been a detective who had to solve a new crime every month or a spy who had to save the world every month or a cat burglar who was always looking for the next score, it would have worked out wonderfully, but that isn't what I write, at least yet.

So I realized instead of focusing on a character, I needed a WORLD through which my characters can run and play. The cast of characters and the situations can change from novel to novel, but the world will remain relatively constant. But where to get such a world?

Then it hit me. I already have it. Heh. And that was the last piece of the puzzle before I settle on my goals, so here they are, a day earlier than I had planned.

Personal Fiction Goals for 2015

- 3000 words of new, publishable fiction per day
- Write and release a new novel every two months based in my magic realism world in Mexico
    - The publication deadlines are 2/28, 4/30, 6/30, 8/31, 10/31 and 12/31.
    - The print release dates are the first day of the following month.
- Write and release three other novels during the year.

- Continue my current streak of writing and publishing one new short story every week.

So my overall goals for 2015 are

- 1,095,000 words of publishable new fiction
- 9 new novels (6 in the MR world)
- 52 new short stories

Okay, I think that's it. I was going to set down some nonfiction goals too, but frankly I don't see nonfiction as a goal. For one thing, I can write nonfiction while standing on my head spitting BBs, and for another, it's something that gets in the way of my fiction writing, so I'll just do those (begrudgingly, knowing me) as I feel I have to.

Remember if you'd like a great deal more on Goal Setting, check Dean Wesley Smith's website a little later today. Probably around 8 a.m. or so. (When you get there, you'll have to scroll down to Writing in Public: Year 2, Month 5, Day 29.)

To the writing.....

Nope. Nothing here for today.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers.....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX
Blog(s): 829

Total fiction words for the month..... 69,703

December 31, 2014[edit]

Rolled out shortly before 2. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

Happy New Year! I wish you all a year of whatever will make you happiest. If that happens to be writing, then I wish you a silent critical voice, trusting your subconscious, and Just Writing.

Well, yesterday I forced myself not to write. Around 3 p.m. I was really jonesing to put some words on the page, but I resisted. Really. It was almost physically painful. Then I got to thinking, y'know, there are so many days that Life Happens and just doesn't allow me to write that probably I need to not force a mandatory day off anymore. The one good thing that came of it is that my fingers are fairly leaping to the keyboard this morning.

I don't want to start my next novel (the first set in my new magic realism world) until tomorrow, so I'm going to write the next story of the week today. So for those of you who follow the free stories on HEStanbrough.com, a new one ("The Baby") will post on Thursday (actually, it's there right now), and then another new one ("Title Goes Here") will post on Monday. (grin)

I'm extremely excited as I write this at about 3 p.m.

- Tomorrow I will begin writing the first novel set in my magic realism world in or near Agua Rocosa, Mexico.
- Today I wrote and posted (it will go live on Monday) the second short story this week. That will

switch my story of the week over to Monday from now on.

Since this is the last day of the year and I just found Heinlein's Rules and WITD this year, I decided to compare the old me (pre-April 2014) with the new, dipped in Heinlein's Rules me. This is mostly for my records, but if you find it of interest it might help you as well. Here's my fiction word count

- Over the course of my entire life (I'm 62) before April 15, 2014: 125,050.
- From April 15, 2014 through December 31, 2014 (37 weeks): 245,170.

Not too shabby, but that's still only 6626 words per week or 946 words per day. Ugh. See how that works? Now, am I complaining? Oh no. I'm just using that as a basis for what I can do now that I know.

Thanks to Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark (learning to trust my subconscious) in eight and one-half months, I *almost doubled* my entire life's fiction writing output before that. Here's some more:

- Before April 15, 2014, I had written 31 short stories during my entire life. I had never even attempted to write a novel, although I had three novels knocking around in my head for several years.
- After April 15, 2014 up through December 31, 2014, I wrote 45 short stories and three novels.

This is why WITD is so important to me personally and why I wish it for you.

Okay, to make it official, here are my fiction goals for the new year again:

Personal Fiction Goals for 2015

- Follow Heinlein's Rules
- 3000 words of new, publishable fiction per day
- Write and release a new MR/based in Mexico novel every two months
- Write and release three other unrelated novels during the year
- Continue my current streak of writing and publishing at least one new short story every week

Personal Nonfiction Goals for 2015

- Continue my every-10-days instructional blog at HarveyStanbrough.com
- Write and record a few more audio lectures
- Write and publish a few more nonfiction books
- Offer a few more writing intensives, maybe
- Spread the word as much as I can about Heinlein's Rules (but only to amenable souls)
- Encourage my friends in their writing

To the writing……
As promised, I wrote a short story, "Title Goes Here"… no really, that IS the title. (grin)

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2892
Blog(s): 631

Total fiction words for the month…… 72,595

January 1, 2015[edit]

Rolled out shortly before 3. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries. Happy New Year to everyone. (Yawn… stretch… I never really got the significance. I mean, the next Everything begins with every passing moment, right? Shrug.)

Only a few of us are posting here with any regularity. This site, aside from being a tool to hold myself personally accountable, is supposed to serve as a forum, an open diary. If you've forgotten your password or anything like that, let me know and I'll email it to you. If you just don't want to post, that's fine too.

Looking forward to starting my next novel today. As I write this (about 4 a.m.) I have not the foggiest notion what it will be about, but I know it will be set in my MR world in Mexico. I do have a wealth of titles, names, and focused situations from which to draw, so it won't be difficult. (grin) Off to start my novel at 4:15 a.m.

A few reminders from previous blog posts:

- You have a choice of mindset.
- You can be a writer who does other things as necessary, or you can be whatever else who also writes sometimes.
- If you want to follow Heinlein's Rules and you've slipped off, there's no time like Right Now to get back on.
- "Polish is a dirty word in the entertainment arts. Unique is what sells." (DWS)
    - I added this one because every one of you has the skill set and the knowledge of the language necessary to make your living as a professional writer. All you have to do is write. That's it. The more you "try" (critical mind) to "make" (critical mind) the writing be what you "think"
      (critical mind) it "should" be (critical mind), the more you're polishing your unique voice right out of it.
- Trust your subconscious. Get out of your own way. Put your fingers on the keyboard and Just Write what comes.
- SNAP OUT OF IT! (from the movie, Moonstruck) (grin)

Okay, that's probably more than enough blathering from me.

To the writing……
Wow, I really *did* have an idea, and I used up most of the day re-teaching myself to write what my subconscious wants to write, what FEELS right, not what I "want" to write. See? My conscious, critical mind still bogs me down too. When I tell you guys to push down that critical mind/critical voice, I'm speaking from ongoing experience.

I started a novel about my old friend Charlie Task (which I've "wanted" to write for awhile), a gringo who got off the bus in Agua Rocosa and sat-in on a few of Juan-Carlos' tall tales. At 1062 new words in (plus a lot of shuffling), I realized a little voice was nagging nagging nagging me.

I finally stopped writing, leaned back in my chair and said, "What?" (yep, aloud). And what came immediately to mind was the very first tale in Stories from the Cantina. It felt very warm and comfortable. Those of you who have read that collection know the first story begins with Maldito's future dad as a boy just leaving the orphanage where he was raised. My subconscious wants me to write THAT story and do it the way I should have done it the first time.

My gut feeling (subconscious) is that if I start there and Just Write, Just Trust Myself, the story will be what it was meant to be all along and some other really neat novels and stories will spin off from it. So no changing of my goals or any of that, and I suspect this is going to be a great experience. I'm going to begin

that one, right now (3:35 p.m.) today, and see what happens. I suspect the words are going to fly off my fingers.

Well, they almost flew off my fingers. From 3:35 to now (4:55) with one short break, I sprouted another 2112 words, so good enough for the day. I'm looking SO forward to jumping back on this early in the morning. (grin)

By the way, because my writing year started with my short story challenge on 15 April 2014, I'm also going to keep count of original new fiction from then, at least through April 14, 2015. Another way to motivate myself. (grin) Also, I realized some of the numbers I reported earlier were off a bit because they were the Smashwords word count, meaning they included the front matter and back matter. I went over them earlier today and revised them to report only actual new words of fiction. So the numbers below are correct.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1062 + 2112
Blog(s): 797

Writing of the Novel, Cantina Tales (working title)
Day 1….. 2112 words. Total words to date……. 2112

Total fiction words for the month…… 3174

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 237,471

January 2, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2:30. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

Thanks to Susan for letting me know she doesn't want to play right now. If she has to leave us, I'm glad it's to practice her craft. Again, this website is intended to be supportive, instructive and encouraging, even motivating, but certainly never a time drain. If you need to leave, just let me know, even if only privately.

Had a board meeting today for the San Pedro Museum. I'm really not cut out for that sort of thing, but it went all right I guess. My inner sissy was annoyed to no end, but the torture ended after only a couple hours.

Did a lot of nonwriting stuff today, like researching surnames, place names, etc. Talked about writing with a friend in Texas, went over the layout for The Wes Crowley Trilogy (drove my first reader and formatter nuts) but got it done and submitted so will quickly glance at it and order a few copies probably very early tomorrow.

I did NOT get nearly as much writing done today as I wanted to, and I should have. I mean, the hours were there. Then again, a daily goal resets every day, so I'll forget today and start over at Word One tomorrow morning.

To the writing……
In three short sessions, I powered through 2649 words. Missed the daily goal, but good enough for today. And today I got a real feel for the subliminal structure of this novel, how it's going to switch among POV characters, etc. Nothing specific (don't want that) but just overall general feel for it so I'm writing in comfort.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers……

Fiction words: 2649
Blog(s): 339

Writing of the Novel, Cantina Tales (working title)
Day 1…… 2112 words. Total words to date…… 2112
Day 2…… 2649 words. Total words to date…. 4761

Total fiction words for the month…… 5823 (Need to be at 6000)

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 240,120

January 3, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 1:30. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

To the writing……

It isn't easy for me to write this, but I started this mess and I want to be as candid as possible here in case it helps any of you, so here goes. Having real trouble just flowing this story out. Not really looking for advice or input. Just having trouble right now. I'm encountering (at below the 5,000 word mark) the wall that most WITD writers usually encounter at about 1/3 of the way through writing a full novel.

I'm gonna give it a few more writing hours, maybe a couple more days, and then if it's still coming out sideways I'm gonna cut my losses and start something brand new. I say "brand new" because what I'm currently working on is a prelude to the Maldito stories. I was gonna write the beginning, then go straight through with a novel, but now I'm thinking maybe something brand new (new characters, new situations) in the MR world or even out of it would be better. Guess we'll see. Doesn't matter. I just want to write. See? We all have these kinds of days/times. The trick is not to avoid getting knocked off Heinlein's Rules. The trick is to keep getting back on.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers, and here's hoping things are muy better tomorrow……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2953
Blog(s): 242

Writing of the Novel, Cantina Tales (working title)
Day 1….. 2112 words. Total words to date……. 2112
Day 2….. 2649 words. Total words to date……. 4761
Day 3….. 1119 words. Total words to date……. 5880

Writing on Angels (working title)
Day 1….. 1834 words. Total words to date……. 1834

Total fiction words for the month…… 8776 (just below the 9000 I should have to be on track… we'll see)

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 243,073

January 4, 2015[edit]

Rolled out late just before 3:30. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

To the writing……

One of my granddaughters took a picture of another of my granddaughters, and a cover and a story sprang from it. So that's good. Otherwise, not sure what I'll get done today if anything. Some good things coming, but today feels like maybe a day off. Sometimes y'just gotta wait it out.

Back tomorrow around 2 a.m. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2017
Blog(s): 161

Writing of the Novel, Cantina Tales (working title)
Day 1….. 2112 words. Total words to date……. 2112
Day 2….. 2649 words. Total words to date……. 4761
Day 3….. 1119 words. Total words to date……. 5880
Day 4….. 1013 words. Total words to date……. 6893

Writing on A Smattering of Angels (working title)
Day 1….. 1834 words. Total words to date……. 1834
Day 2….. 1004 words. Total words to date……. 2838

Total fiction words for the month…… 10,793 (farther behind the 12000 I should have to be on track…)

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 245,090

January 5, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

Took care of some admin stuff from last year, clearing out responsibility for others' websites (resigned as General Manager of the Universe), emailed my current backup guy to see why my backups are going wacky. Got a response and spent the next couple hours updating the plugin over several sites. I really need to find a new hobby.

Okay, more on goal setting. I'm passing-on a lot of this to you as I learn it myself in hopes it will slash some of the learning curve for you.

As you know, a few days ago I set my goals for the year. One of those goals had to do with writing several novels. I intend to meet and probably surpass that goal, but I have to adjust how I get there.

If I look at writing 60,000 words as "writing a novel," I'm forcing myself to see the goal as a single huge thing and I allow myself to feel overwhelmed. That in turn causes a lot of completely unreasonable fear. Of course, knowing it's unreasonable and being able to deal with it are two vastly different things. Yup. I'm human. Go figure.

However, if my goal is simply to write 3,000 words (two to three scenes) per day, that's much more manageable, and if I reach that goal, I will have finished that 60,000 word novel in 20 days. So I'm changing my goals for the year:

Personal Fiction Goals for 2015

- Follow Heinlein's Rules (especially, for me, 1 and 2)
- 3000 words of new, publishable fiction per day, whether in short fiction, novellas or novels
- Continue my current streak of writing and publishing at least one new short story every week (to post every Monday)

Actually, I'm not changing the goals so much as how I'm presenting them to myself. I'm adjusting my focus to the daily word count of publishable words. If I take care of business in that regard, the rest will take care of itself. The only other thing I'll have to remember is to be sure to write and put up a new short story each week from among those words.

Okay, now that I've settled that with myself, this will be my final post until I get a few more things figured out. I hope hope hope hope freakin' *hope* I'm not a sprint writer like DWS. I don't WANT to be a sprint writer, meaning I write like crazy for awhile, and then just stop for awhile. I've been at this such a short time, though, I'm not really sure right now what kind of writer I am. But I don't wanna be a sprint writer. I just don't. (Channeling my inner two year old. Hi Harv, wanna be a sprint writer? **NO!**)

So anyway, to save all of you from having to listen to an undue amount of whining and fretting and gnashing of the few teeth I have left, I'm going to go away for a few days. At least I don't think it'll take longer than that. And when I've settled some things between my head and my fingers and they've decided to play nice again, I'll take 'em out of time out and, as the future governor of California once said, Al be back. Whoever the hell Al is.

In the meantime, for now, I've set aside the MR novel tentatively titled "Cantina Tales." Gervasio wants to go fishing with Nick, who's been conspicuously absent of late, or something. I suspect the writing tentatively titled "A Smattering of Angels" will be a short story at some time or other, but for now… well, let's just say I'm really glad I have until next Monday to pump out another short story. I also started a novel called Reliance (another tentative title) and set it aside as well. So I'll see you back here in a day or two or five.

Of course, I'll continue checking in on Your posts, etc. so keep doing whatever you're doing that works for you. Except writing from critical mind. Don't do that. Love your words, don't wrestle them to the ground and slap the cuffs on them (ahem, Alison).

Back later. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 1551
Blog(s): 746

Writing of the Novel, Reliance (working title, probably shelved after today)
Day 1….. 1551 words. Total words to date……. 1551

Total fiction words for the month…… 12,344

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 246,641

NOT POSTED TO THE SITE… only for my personal use…

January 6, 2015

Rolled out at 3:30, email, journal entries.

No writing today so far, but not really worrying about it.

Ordered from Amazon and started reading In Electric Mist with Confederate Dead by James Lee Burke. TON of detail. Figured if I can't write right now I might as well read for pleasure. I haven't done that for so many years it's a shame. I'll move from Burke to Spillane and read a few of his for pleasure, and also for beginnings.

Kind of taking some time off from life, reassessing myself as a writer, learning new ways to do the two major things in my life: walking and writing. Actually, for the past several months, it's been writing and walking, but no need to quibble. I enjoy both, need to keep up with both, and both for my health. An exploding head is not a pretty sight even at 62.

Anyway, just to keep my hand in, I'll post daily to this even if not to the site. I think having a record of these early writing trials is important. Maybe for me, maybe for one or more of my children or grandchildren or great grandchildren who is a writer.

If you're out there, forget all the crap you hear from non-fiction writers about writing fiction (English and Lit teachers, agents, publishers, et al). Don't submit your work to critique groups. Just follow Heinlein's Rules and when you fall off (and you will fall off) get back on and keep riding them. If you do, you *will* be a success as a writer. Here they are so you know:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must not rewrite (ever, period).
4. You must publish what you write so readers can buy it.
5. You must leave your work up so more readers can buy it.

Fiction words: XXXX
Blog(s): 331

Total fiction words for the month..... 12,344

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 246,641

NOT POSTED TO THE SITE... only for my personal use...

January 7, 2015

No writing today. Want to continue saying I'm not really worried about it, but I am worried about it. Tomorrow I will write, period.

Fiction words: XXXX
Blog(s): 44

Total fiction words for the month..... 12,344

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 246,641

January 8, 2015[edit]

Rolled out early this morning at 1. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

Enjoyed my hiatus and hated it.

Got a lot of reading done for pleasure (that's the part I enjoyed). If you want to be made to feel inadequate re scene description (or if you want to learn to write extremely rich description), buy In the Electric Mist with Confederate Dead by James Lee Burke. It's only a couple dollars at Amazon.com right now. Oh. My. God. Excellent book. I really enjoy description so I liked it, but he overdoes it quite a bit so it slowed the story considerably. Still, I recommend it. Also started reading some Mike Hammer stuff by Mickey Spillane. Really good stuff if you want to learn description and pacing.

No writing during the hiatus (that's the part I hated). I pecked a bit here and there, kept up with what you guys were doing (those of you who posted) and enjoyed it. Tendered my resignation more broadly as General Manager of the Universe (I'd say I weened some folks, but I ain't built like that).

The upshot of my hiatus is that I don't think I'm a sprint writer (yay!). I suspect I just stubbed my toe between projects, couldn't settle on one, and foundered for awhile. I think I'm back. I'll be taking precautions not to let that whole hiatus thing happen again.

Okay, off here for NYPD Blue.

Back later. Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4387 (525 on unrelated story)
Blog(s): 254

Writing of the Novel, Drab as Death
Day 1….. 3862 words. Total words to date……. 3862
At this point I think it has the potential to be a novel, but who knows?

Total fiction words for the month…….. 16,731

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…….. 251,028

January 9, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

I've worked reading for pleasure into my schedule. Probably because of all the years I was a copyeditor, I'm able to read for pleasure and study the writing (if it grabs me) simultaneously. If you can do that, I recommend it. If you can't, I still recommend reading for pleasure. Then when a particular story or novel (or part of it) grabs you, go back and study it to see what grabbed you and why, how the author did it.

Note: You can even copy a passage word for word to get the sounds and word types and rhythms down. Nothing wrong with that. (Of course, never represent it as your own. It's strictly an exercise.) Again, I recommend doing this.

Reading for pleasure is what got me started writing again. Like Wes, I had to re-learn to let go a little, not focus so tightly on what I wanted, so I would see more of what was coming at me. He put it better than I can, but you get the drift. The more tightly you focus on what you want, the less likely you are to see it when it drifts by in your periphery.

Oh, I was gonna say, some of you will remember that I wrote a story some years ago titled "Soft as a Breeze." I wrote it primarily to illustrate how to use sentence length and punctuation to involve the reader on an emotional level. Well if you'd like to see the same technique used by a major author, find the short story titled "The Village" by James Lee Burke. (If you can't find it separately, it's the second story in the

collection, Jesus Out to Sea: Stories.)

Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4187
Blog(s): 323

Writing of the Novel, Drab as Death
Day 1….. 3862 words. Total words to date……. 3862
Day 2….. 4187 words. Total words to date……. 8049
Still think it has the potential to be a novel, but who knows?

Total fiction words for the month…… 20,918

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 255,215

January 10, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:45. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

Got some good writing done today although not a lot. Opted for a walk (only 4 miles) and when I got back remembered there's a football game I want to watch, so I'm gonna take the rest of the day off after I eat.

Very much enjoying the two main characters in this story and the voyage on which they're taking me. I actually look forward to tomorrow morning when I can slip quietly out the back door and run playing with them again.

Here are my numbers……

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1509
Blog(s): 157

Writing of the Novel, Drab as Death
Day 1….. 3862 words. Total words to date……. 3862
Day 2….. 4187 words. Total words to date……. 8049
Day 2….. 1509 words. Total words to date……. 9558
Still think it has the potential to be a novel, but who knows?

Total fiction words for the month…… 22,427
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 256,724

January 11, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 3 this morning. Answered a few emails, a few journal entries.

In my second hour, I was about to begin working on Drab as Death again when I remembered I'd switched my short story of the week from Thursday to Monday. And Monday's tomorrow. Oops. So I looked around. I kind'a like the Angel story I was writing a few days ago, but it just wasn't working right, so I threw it out, then sat and stared at the photo that had inspired it in the first place.

The photo (it's now the cover photo) was of my three year old granddaughter (Julia) and was taken by

another granddaughter (Amberly) so that made it very special to me. So after I stared at the pic for awhile, I turned to the keyboard and put my fingers on the keys. Suddenly I was a professor of Philosophy at a Midwestern university. I was going to write something about an angel who appeared as a three year old child. And there y'go.

You can see the result at http://hestanbrough.com/a-smattering-of-angels/. If you read it, be sure to read the note afterward. (grin) So at this point, I've written 3466 words, created an ebook cover, and published the story to the site, Smashwords, and Amazon. Woohoo! And there are two ballgames I want to watch today, so probably gonna take the rest of the day off since the first game starts in a half-hour. (grin) Enjoy your weekend, folks.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3466
Blog(s): 316

Writing of the Story of the Week, "A Smattering of Angels"... 3466 words

Writing of the Novel, Drab as Death
Day 1..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 3862
Day 2..... 4187 words. Total words to date..... 8049
Day 3..... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 9558
No writing on this one today. Back at it tomorrow.

Total fiction words for the month..... 25,893
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 260,190

January 12, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Got through emails, a few journal entries.

Back to work on my current main work, though now I'm sure it's going to be a novella. Whipped through a few thousand words today and actually wrote the ending. That's just weird for me. Usually I write past the ending and start feeling all strange, then back up and find it. Not this time.

Also, I've never written anything in pieces and out of order before. But there are a few more scenes the characters want to play through, so should be finished tomorrow or the next day. Great fun. It would be even more fun if they decided to turn this into a novel, but I just don't think it's gonna happen. There's only so much you can do with a girl who's out for a good time and a hit man who's ready to give his life for love. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3251
Blog(s): 214

Writing of the Novella, Drab as Death
Day 1..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 3862
Day 2..... 4187 words. Total words to date..... 8049
Day 3..... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 9558
Day 4..... 3251 words. Total words to date..... 12809
Probably into the home stretch tomorrow or Wednesday.

Total fiction words for the month..... 29,144
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 263,441

January 13, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3. Got through emails, a few journal entries.

Still early morning, but I've been fiddling with my websites, revising welcome messages, stuff like that. Also adjusted my MailChimp "campaigns" (ugh, I hate that word) for the educational posts on my main website at HarveyStanbrough.com and the free short stories on HEStanbrough.com.

Now instead of being able to read the entire post in an email, the recipient must click a link and read the rest of the post on the site. I guess it's little enough to ask. Thanks to Alison for the idea. Also added a PayPal "Tip Jar" to both sites. I don't intend to get rich from it, but when I hit my first million, I'll invite everyone down to my dream place in Ecuador for the winter. You'll have to bring your own sleeping bags and Large Cat Repellent though. I also recommend a large spray can of Boa Unconstrictor. (No, I don't know whether they have boas. Still funny though.) (grin)

Didn't write much today. This thing is so much fun to write that it's easy to sit down and write for 10 or 20 minutes, then go do something else and come back to it. Very easy to get into, and a blast playing with these two characters. But I had a lot of chores and the day slipped away from me. No worries. I'll probably finish it tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1424
Blog(s): 1251 (914 on the big blog + 337 here)

Writing of the Novella, Drab as Death
Day 1..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 3862
Day 2..... 4187 words. Total words to date..... 8049
Day 3..... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 9558
Day 4..... 3251 words. Total words to date..... 12809
Day 5..... 1424 words. Total words to date..... 14233
Into the home stretch probably tomorrow.

Total fiction words for the month..... 30,568 (*This is on track for over 61,000 for the month and, by extension, 733,000 for the year... far short of my goal of 1,095,000 for the year, but a LOT better than 264,000 in 9 months* (grin))
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 264,865

January 14, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little before 3. Got through emails, a few journal entries.

Back to writing the novella. Got a better name for it. Looking forward to finishing this one today so I can move on to something else.

Cool. Finished my first novella today, definitely a standalone. I was telling someone the other day, as much as I love these characters and enjoy writing them and spending time with them, Joseph "Joey Bones" Salerno and Vera have only this one story to tell. I'm both glad it's finished and sorry to see these characters fade. They won't be back, but there will be others similar to them.

When I rolled out this morning I thought I'd both finish this one and start the next one today, but that isn't to be. This one needed a bit more than I thought it would need, and I shot past my daily word goal so I'm good. Plus I'm pooped.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 4057
Blog(s): 225

Writing of the Novella, *A Little Time*
Day 1..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 3862
Day 2..... 4187 words. Total words to date..... 8049
Day 3..... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 9558
Day 4..... 3251 words. Total words to date..... 12809
Day 5..... 1424 words. Total words to date..... 14233
Day 6..... 4057 words. Total words to date..... 18290 Done!

Total fiction words for the month..... 34,625
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 268,922

January 15, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Got through emails, a few journal entries.

I mentioned in one comment to a journal entry that I'm puzzled a bit by all the critical mind stuff I'm seeing in the posts. I'm all for whatever works for you, though, so if it has to be piecemeal and if that's how you want to do it, go for it. It isn't easy to remain glued to Heinlein's Rules (though it does get remarkably easier as writing becomes more fun), and it's even more difficult to push down the critical mind in all its guises, but I'm pulling for you as long as you want to try it.

The whole critical mind thing reminds me of something I found around the beginning of this wonderful trip. I looked up Bradbury's Rules for Writing online, and the first site I happened to find was a blog. The guy quoted Bradbury ("In quickness is truth"), but then he put words in the great man's mouth (the italics are what he added):

Bradbury believed *that when it comes to first drafts,* don't think, just write.

Had the blogger removed "that when it comes to first drafts" he'd have represented exactly what Bradbury believed: Don't think, just write. But I have to wonder, with frustration leaking at every pore, how many young writers actually bought into this guy's revision of Bradbury's rules? Below is the rest of the quote. The italics are mine, to point out places where the writer reversed Bradbury's own advice yet still made it seem attributed to Bradbury:

Long before cognitive neuroscience proved him right, Bradbury understood the importance of short-circuiting one's Inner Critic *during the initial phase of creative work*: "The faster you blurt, the more swiftly you write, the more honest you are. In hesitation is thought. In delay comes the effort for a style, instead of leaping upon truth which is the only style worth deadfalling and tiger-trapping." Let speed ... be your friend. *Just get it down. Fast. Even if it's crap. Don't worry, you can always invite your Inner Critic back to the party during the revision phase.*

I put the last few sentences in italics because the implication is that Bradbury himself would tell you the same thing if he could. This is perhaps the worst kind of literary theft. This creep robbed a great man of his words, twisted them so they meant the opposite of what Bradbury actually said, and then offered them to the world as his own. I won't even give you the guy's name because I don't want to direct any traffic to his website.

The thing is, Bradbury made it plain on several occasions that he wasn't talking about a "first draft" and that he didn't have a "revision phase." At one point in his career, he was writing a short story every day. Every day. And he himself said, "Dandelion Wine, like most of my books, was a surprise... I simply got out of bed each morning, walked to my desk, and put down any word or series of words that happened along

in my head." Sound familiar?

In other words, he just wrote off into the dark. And that brings up the second topic, sort of. A lot of people I know seem to be struggling with WITD. I think I screwed up when I taught it. Learning how to write off into the dark is like learning how to fall down. How do you fall down? Let go. How do you write into the dark? Let go. Stop trying to control every word, every thought, every step of every character. Seriously, how would you like it if someone did that to you? Seriously.

Bradbury, like ALL of the old pulp writers and like practically all (if not all) successful long-term fiction writers, wrote off into the dark. What's that mean? He wrote without planning, without a road map, without allowing his critical mind to become involved. I suspect he still struggled sometimes with his critical mind poking its nose in where it didn't belong, but the key is that he didn't let it take over. For whatever that's worth.

I'm still fighting this battle myself. Hence my recent hiatus. But I'm back. I wrote a novella in a week, and frankly, if I'd wanted to add a few "they attack her / he defends her" scenes it would have been very easy to turn into a novel. But that isn't what it wanted to be. It wanted to be a semi-romance gangster thing. It wanted to tell the story of Joey Bones Salerno and Vera, and then it didn't want to talk anymore.

Speaking of the novella, my first reader found a few issues, so I dealt with those and (in creative voice) cycled back and added about 600 words to the thing. (That's why I'm calling it 7 days instead of 6.) Then I created the cover and published it. Not sure yet whether I'll put it into print also or save it to combine with some short fiction in a collection.

Anyway, no more writing for today. I'm currently averaging well over 2,000 words per day for the month, so no biggie. Back at it hot and heavy tomorrow. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 620
Blog(s): 941

Writing of the Novella, A Little Time
Day 1..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 3862
Day 2..... 4187 words. Total words to date..... 8049
Day 3..... 1509 words. Total words to date..... 9558
Day 4..... 3251 words. Total words to date..... 12809
Day 5..... 1424 words. Total words to date..... 14233
Day 6..... 4057 words. Total words to date..... 18290
Day 7..... 620 words. Total words to date..... 18910 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 35,245
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 269,542

January 16, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3 this morning. Got through emails, a few journal entries, comments. Thanks everybody.

One note on what I was talking about yesterday. Whatever your process for writing, it's fine. I wish good things for all of you, but I can't really care, y'know? I have my own battles to fight and all that. My only real recommendation is that, if doing what you're doing the way you're doing it isn't working for you—if it makes writing feel like drudgery, or if you're allowing fear to keep you from writing (you know)—then maybe you should try something new, that's all. Like letting go and just writing. But it's all between you and the person in the mirror.

Trust me, I know whereof I speak. Almost every time I finish something I'm extremely excited to get to the next piece, whether short story, novel or whatever. But to be honest, as I'm trying to start a new project, almost every time, I'm immobilized by completely unreasonable fear. Seriously. Almost every time, I have to work through the fear or push it down, reminding myself that if a story doesn't work out, absolutely NOTHING will happen. That my story or novel is NOT a big deal. It is NOT an event. It really is just a chance to run playing with my friends for awhile, and what could be better than that? That's what I wish for all of you, that you regularly run playing with your friends.

On the novella I just finished… I decided to publish it in paper too because why not? I probably also will include it in a collection later. Duh.

Oh by the way, I recommend you visit Dean's site and read these two blog posts as you have time. On each one, when you get to the page, scroll down to *Topic of the Night* and begin reading there if you'd rather. Read them in sequence. This might help you understand how to look at your writing as an investment.

http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-6-day-11/

http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-6-day-12/

I was going pretty good on a new story, but one finger on my left hand went electric on me, so I stopped for awhile. Repriced some of my stories on Amazon and Smashwords and then did a load of laundry. Anyway…

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1329
Blog(s): 419

Writing of an as-yet unnamed story of undetermined length (grin)
Day 1…… 1329 words. Total words to date…… 1329

Total fiction words for the month…… 36,574
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 270,871

January 17, 2015[edit]

Rolled out late this morning at 3:30. Got through emails, a few journal entries, comments.

I restructured the site a little. Some members are simply not posting, so I moved them off the menu. They still have an active account, but I understand it isn't everyone's cuppa whatever. I've even heard that posting to a site like this can actually harm creativity for some folks. (shrug) Anyway, if your name isn't on the menu and you decide later you'd like to post, just let me know and I'll add you again.

I was gonna write a whole big long thing here about challenges, specifically my own biggest personal challenge, which is the seeming lack of ability to sever outcome from intent. But instead I think I'll just make that my belated New Year's Resolution (from this moment forward, I will sever outcome from intent… ommmmmm) and get back to writing my story. (grin)

Awhile back someone was asking me about whether you can make (quick) money writing short stories. The short answer is no. Short stories are quick to write (relatively) but they don't sell as well as collections, and collections don't sell as well as novels, and novels don't sell as well as novel series. That's the hierarchy. (And westerns and SF, in books, are currently the worst-selling genres, you know, just in case you were wondering.)
Okay, so the answer about short stories being good for making quick money is no. But for a much better, more thorough answer, take a look at Dean's blog: http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-

year-2-month-6-day-16/ .

Generally he says the quick money is in writing series novels, I assume because they build a base of readers who are interested in a certain set of characters and/or how the author writes a certain genre. In short, if you enjoy writing short stories, write them and be sure to put them in collections (5-story and 10-story) to create multiple revenue streams off each short story. If you write a short story only now and then but you enjoy writing novels, perhaps you should consider using the short stories (and maybe an occasional collection or two) "as a form of loss leader for your novels". Sounds like good advice to me. In that post he also continues the discussion of ROI.

Anyway… The writing was good today. Didn't quite hit my daily goal, but did some solid writing in a new genre for me (Horror). If you're a Texas Chainsaw Massacre enthusiast, though, be forewarned, I don't do slash and gash. I do psychological stuff. If there's one thing a neurotic knows, it's psychological stuff. So anyway, if you wanna see this story, you can see it free at HEStanbrough.com.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2275
Blog(s): 419

Writing of "Tradition," the story of the week (horror genre)
Day 1…… 1329 words. Total words to date…… 1329
Day 2…… 2275 words. Total words to date…… 3604 done

Total fiction words for the month…… 38,849
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 273,146

January 18, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 2 this morning. Got through emails, a few journal entries, comments. About 3:30 my wife got up, not feeling well, so switched roles from Writer to Dr. Dad. Couple hours later, she went back to bed and I came back to work. So it'll be a non-writing day so I'm posting this early.

When she first got up and came in to find me, I was researching mysteries and thrillers. I'm not really so interested in writing mysteries (leaving clues and keeping them straight would drive me nuts… my mind doesn't work like that) but I'm hyper-interested in writing psychological suspense, so thrillers and horror should be right up my alley. Well, you know, if I had an alley right up which thrillers and horror could be, which I don't. Or something.

Anyway, I found some extremely interesting and informative and most of all LEGITIMATE sites with VALID writing advice and thought I'd share them with you, just in case you might be interested. This is hands-down the best, most concise instruction on writing the Thriller genre I've ever found, and seriously, that's saying a lot:

Kill Zone: "Ten Tips on Pace and Structure of a Thriller"

http://killzoneauthors.blogspot.com/2010/09/ten-tips-on-pace-structure-of-thriller.html

For a good overview of the Thriller genre and its subgenres I found WikiPedia useful:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thriller_%28genre%29

If you're interested in learning to write mysteries, I found these that I recommend. Note that these also cross over into suspense:

http://blog.karenwoodward.org/p/how-to-write-murderously-good-mystery.html

http://mysterythrillerbooks.com/how-to-write-a-murder-mystery/#.U3vwLjICnJY.google_plusone_share

http://mysterywritingismurder.blogspot.ca/2013/01/5-tips-to-create-page-turning-plot.html

Why am I searching like this? Well, because I don't ever want to stop learning, but mostly because I realized recently I really enjoy writing novels more than I enjoy writing short stories. I get a lot more stressed over the short stories. And I've always enjoyed writing psychological stuff, so we'll see what pans out.

Okay, so no fiction writing here today unless a few characters rush in, knock me down, and start jumping up and down on my chest. I'll read and re-read some of what I researched, read some for pleasure, and watch some American football. Maybe do a little nonfiction stuff. And playing chief cook, bottle washer, and Dr. Dad.

Looking very forward to tomorrow when the world will shift on its axis again and everything will be back to (my version of) normal. Tata!

Today's Writing
Fiction words: el zippo
Blog(s): 400

Total fiction words for the month..... 38,849
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 273,146

January 19, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 3 this morning. After emails, a few journal entries, comments, I looked for David Fryxell's work on Amazon (re Mary Ann) and found these two books:

How to Write Fast While Writing Well and Write Faster, Write Better

Both are paperback (or hard bound) and both are available for a penny plus shipping. Not kidding. And the reviews are raves. So if that interests you, there y'go. They aren't available in Kindle that I could find.

Very glad to be back at the writing 'puter this morning after basically wasting a whole day yesterday. Ugh. I have GOT to stop doing that.

I had a snippet of a scene in my head that's been there for three days. I sat down and wrote an opening off that scene, figuring maybe it'd take off. It didn't. It died quickly, so I deleted it, period. Took it out back and shot it in the head. Buried it right out back on state land. It was only an opening, something well over 500 words, so I'll just call it 500.

Today pretty much got away from me, but I have a good one started. Back at it in the morning.

I started this blog as kind of my version of DWS's Writing in Public blog, in which he lets others (the world) see how much he writes and turns out despite living a pretty much normal life and doing all the things all the rest of us do. The only difference is that I've kept this pretty much private, among a few close acquaintances who are aware of Heinlein's Rules and the value of writing off into the dark, and who know that writing quickly is not synonymous with writing poorly.

However, in that regard, I'm falling down at my end of things a bit. If I'm gonna walk the walk and show those of you who are still struggling with the concept of WITD that it's not only possible but preferable, I have to knuckle down a bit. I intend to do that in the coming days.

IF writing is your priority and IF you've been wavering in your determination (I waver like a silk flag in a high wind), hang in there and do what you want to do. If you love to write and tell stories, then just write and tell stories. Skip all the "book as event" crap and just tell stories. Get one done, out and published for no other reason than so you can get to the next one.

Other than lending me a mild sense of accomplishment, my stories, regardless of length from flash fiction through novels, don't matter in the slightest. They're just fun for me to write and fun for at least some people to read. That's all they are. That and a reason to design covers and play with some really cool art.

So I vow to remember that, pick up my end, and kick myself into double time instead of slouching along like I have been.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2013
Blog(s): 532

Writing of Brain Food
Day 1..... 1513 words. Total words to date..... 1513

Total fiction words for the month..... 40,952
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 275,159

January 20, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30 and took care of emails, a few journal entries.

In the killing-time and waking-up department this morning, I went through my email address book and deleted almost half the addresses. Wow. Amazing how that stuff accumulates over the years.

More on "Brain Food" today. Probably should have finished it, but tomorrow's soon enough. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2468
Blog(s): 90

Writing of Brain Food
Day 1..... 1513 words. Total words to date..... 1513
Day 2..... 2468 words. Total words to date..... 3981

Total fiction words for the month..... 44,933
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 279,140

January 21, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 for emails, a few journal entries.

Started writing on "Brain Food" early today and finished it. I was actually surprised it took over 1600 more words to reach the end. (grin)

Have to meet the outgoing director from the San Pedro Valley Arts & Historical Society (Benson Museum) for an hour or so this morning, so I'm glad I got that one finished, but still, a little write-us interruptus here. Sigh. Back to writing as soon as I get back.

Also have a sister-in-law visiting from Friday night through Tuesday or Wednesday, but you know that "priorities are up to you" thing I keep tossing out there? I plan to keep my schedule the whole time regardless.

No more writing for today. Got the cover done and the thing published and it's a good story so that's enough for now. Back at it tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1682
Blog(s): 193

Writing of "Brain Food," next story of the week
Day 1..... 1513 words. Total words to date..... 1513
Day 2..... 2468 words. Total words to date..... 3981
Day 3..... 1682 words. Total words to date..... 5663 Done

Total fiction words for the month..... 46,615
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 280,822

January 22, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30 for emails, a few journal entries.

No new fiction writing today, and I kind of expected that would happen.

I used the novella, A Little Time, to work on setting up a kind of a pattern or style sheet for how I want all my future print books to look. As a result, Deb submitted it a few times for me. That took up most of the morning. I'll find out sometime early tomorrow morning whether I'm finished with that process.

I did some more work on the handout for the Writing the Character-Driven Story intensive, which I'm presenting day after tomorrow, Saturday, in Benson. It's going to be radically good, folks. You're gonna be glad you came to this one. If anyone else would like to jump in, I do have a few openings at this point. Just let me know via email so I can send you the pre-intensive homework. (grin)

Anyway, didn't get that finished today either and I'm mostly toast at this point, so I'll finish it up tomorrow and maybe do a little fiction too.

It's weird. Used to be I could fly through putting together a nonfiction how-to on writing or a seminar handout. Getting this one organized the way I want it is like pulling teeth. Gonna be nice when it clicks. Especially when I'm putting together the exercises (at least four writing exercises) it's really difficult not to just slip into creative mind and take off writing some of the ideas I'm coming up with for the exercises. Weird, but a very good kind of weird.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX
Blog(s): 254

Total fiction words for the month..... 46,615
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 280,822

January 23, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 for emails. Got to the journal entries and comments last night. Nothing new for the morning.

Went right to the handout for tomorrow's writing intensive. Finished it by about 8, then printed it and moved on to a new story I'm trying out. Something different for me.

Got a little fiction writing done but nothing I can name yet, and life is rearing its ugly head. I have a scheduled and necessary trip to Sierra Vista around noon. As a result I started watching the clock too closely to be able to just let myself go into my fiction. So I'm stopping for the day. Gonna get ready to go, then read for pleasure for a bit.

I'm posting this early because I plan to sack out soon after I get back from SV. I have to drive into Tucson tonight to pick up a sister-in-law at the airport sometime after 11. So it's one of those completely ugh days.

Anyway, with any luck I'll start my Saturday when I get back from Tucson. At least that's the plan. (grin) And I'll see a lot of you in the morning at 8-ish at the Horseshoe or 9 in the classroom.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2135
Blog(s): 228

Writing on as yet unnamed new project
Day 1..... 2135 words. Total words to date..... 2135

Total fiction words for the month..... 48,750
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 282,957

January 24, 2015[edit]

Strange night. Caught some rest from about 6 to 9:30, then the trip to Tucson. Got back around 12:30 and was going to just stay up, but after a few minutes I realized I was too tired, so I went to bed for a nap. Amazing what a difference another hour and a half makes.

Rolled out shortly after 2 for emails and one post.

With a different person in the house my little girl (a Siamese kit) is upset, so she slept next to my head for an hour and a half, then got up and came to the office with me, where she walked across the desk and put one hand on my chest. So I cuddled her on my left arm and sipped coffee with my right hand. Now she's sleeping on my chair pad on a folding chair next to my desk. In a scant four hours I'll meet some of you at the Horseshoe for breakfast before the seminar. Gonna be a great, fun day with or without any writing. (grin)

Got a little writing done before the seminar, a little more during the seminar. Good enough given all the rest that's going on. GREAT session at Writing the Character-Driven Story. My sincere thanks to all who came. YOU made it a great class. I might conduct this one again.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1832
Blog(s): 260

Writing on as yet unnamed new project

Day 1..... 2135 words. Total words to date..... 2135
Day 2..... 1832 words. Total words to date..... 3967

Total fiction words for the month..... 50,582
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 284,789

January 25, 2015[edit]

Rolled out shortly after 2 for emails and one post.

Not the best day writing I've had for awhile, but pretty good. A lot of cycling back in a new project, working title Paul Posey. I think it's gonna be a thriller starring one of my old favorite characters or maybe (probably) a new character who's similar to one of my old favorite characters. I'm really looking forward to writing Paul Posey. Almost every word is a surprise. (grin)

For some reason, Going Back popped back into my head today with some new direction too. Not quite what I need yet, but almost. I can tell that what I need on that one is coming pretty soon. I hope I'll be able to knock out the Paul Posey one first. (The last time I wrote on Going Back was November 28.)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2687
Blog(s): 168

Writing of Paul Posey
Day 1..... 2687 words. Total words to date..... 2687

Total fiction words for the month..... 53,264
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 287,476

January 26, 2015[edit]

Rolled out shortly after 2 for emails and one post.

Well, another considerably less than optimum day. By all rights, today should have been a great writing day, but under threat of rain I didn't get off my lazy butt and go for a walk until LATE, about 1:15, when I finally said fooey and just went. Turned out to be a pretty good walk at least, about 3.5 miles, and somewhat snapped me out of my bad mood, so I'm hoping I'll be going nuts with writing tomorrow. So anyway, it is what it is and tomorrow starts around 2 a.m. I'll be back then.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1504
Blog(s): 138

Writing of Paul Posey
Day 1..... 2687 words. Total words to date..... 2687
Day 2..... 1504 words. Total words to date..... 4191

Total fiction words for the month..... 54,768
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 288,980

January 27, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3 for emails.

Well, my big experiment with the journal seems to have fallen into all but oblivion. (grin)That's fine. I just hope you're all writing what you want to write and as much as you want to write. If you aren't yet writing as much as you want to write, I hope you get there when you're ready.

Even when I don't post here (only a couple days so far) I still post to a private journal in Microsoft Word so I have a record of this journey. So if the journal dies, it dies. Not a major thing. The reason I didn't make it public in the first place is because if a reader knows we write fast, he'll also think we write badly. (shrug) That's because readers heard all the same myths that we all heard in high school and elsewhere. It really is terrible that so many minds have been poisoned by such inane garbage.

Think about it. Do those who labor in other forms of artistic expression rework and rework and rework the same piece over and over and over until it looks like everything else in the field? No. They chisel or paint or otherwise practice one piece at a time. They grow in their craft, rather than rehashing and polishing all the originality off one piece of work. Very sad.

I do hope you guys have "gotten it" and that you're running with it. Just the fact that it isn't easy should be proof enough that WITD is a valid technique. And then consider that paradox: Just Letting Go of mind-numbing work for the freedom of play is difficult. Just Letting Go of "rules" in favor of Art is difficult. Just Letting Go of controlling every minuscule aspect of your characters' lives is difficult. Hmmmm……

Yet another less than optimum writing day for me. I'm beginning to think I am that "sprint writer" that I so desperately do not want to be. I seem to write like crazy until I finish a project. Then I vacillate, starting new works, kicking them out, starting over or starting new ones. Finally I settle on one and write like crazy again. I'd really rather just write every day, but I can't think of a single legitimate reason to keep nagging a story that doesn't want to grow. Guess I'll just keep at it until the next project takes hold and it becomes fun again.

Today I wrote another 887 words on Paul Posey, but I'm gonna let that one drop away for awhile now. Also wrote 508 words (an opening to Thursday of my Evenings at 7 in the Parish Hall series) on another story. That's it. See? Flailing. But writing.

I have to go to Tucson soon to take the sis-in-law back to the airport, so I'm gonna close this out for the day. Hope to be back in time for NYPD Blue and then tomorrow back to my version of normal. See you then.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1395
Blog(s): 543

Writing of Paul Posey
Day 1…… 2687 words. Total words to date……. 2687
Day 2…… 1504 words. Total words to date……. 4191
Day 2…… 887 words. Total words to date……. 5078 stalled

Total fiction words for the month……. 56,163
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 290,375

January 28, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3 again. Hope I'm not slipping into a pattern. Anyway, got through a few emails, then directly into writing.

Incredible how much my own patterns seem to mimic those of DWS. Not necessarily good, just incredible. By the way, he has a great post on his site today. Go to http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-

public-year-2-month-6-day-27/ to see it. Just so you know, I wrote over 3,000 words on my new novel this morning before I went to DWS site and read what's there. That's part of what I meant when I said it was incredible.

So I'm back at writing. It's flowing well and it will be what it will be. This novel, right now, is being written by Eric Stringer. Not only that, but the first-person narrator is Charlie Task. If you don't know Charlie… well, he's a very truth-oriented guy but it's a blatant, flat truth. The thing about Charlie is, if you aren't a child or a cat, he doesn't care enough about you to lie. If you aren't a child or a cat, you're a drone, a danger, an enabler or an impediment. You can't get his goat because he doesn't own one. No ego. Just "It is what it is." Interesting guy.

So for now, suffice it to say this will not be another less than optimum writing day. Woohoo!

Yesterday I wrote "tomorrow [I'll be] back to my version of normal."] It's amazing how true that was. Not only is my routine back, but I'm writing again (like hotcakes, which I had for breakfast). It's a wonderful day. I hope this novel is 500,000 words just so I don't have to go through that funk again for awhile. (grin) Okay, here's the report on today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4052
Blog(s): 318

Writing of Eric Stringer's first novel
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date……. 5052

Total fiction words for the month…….. 60,215 (very pleased with this, and still three days to go)
Total fiction words for the year…….. 60,215
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…….. 294,427

January 29, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:15, so closer to my normal. Got through some emails, then wrote awhile.

Something didn't feel right, so I checked my email again and found a journal entry I'd seen but forgot to comment on. Oops. So I went back and commented, then went back to the writing. Forgetting to do something else because I was writing felt good, though I certainly didn't mean to slight Alison. (grin)

I think this particular novel is going to be along the lines of "true confessions," something like that. I'm still writing what amounts to the intro, in which the protagonist explains to the reader what differentiates him from them. Kind of like the intro you see in the beginning of some how-to books, in which the author presents his credentials and explains why he's qualified to have written the how-to book. Except this is the character explaining why he's qualified and having quite a lot of fun as he does so.

Again, this should be a great writing day. Woohoo!

Okay, here's the report on today. Turned out pretty good for the day, and I don't want to push it. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3095
Blog(s): 192

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date…… 4052

Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147

Total fiction words for the month..... 63,310 (Yes!)
Total fiction words for the year..... 63,310
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 297,522

January 30, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:45. Very few emails, weird but happily accepted. No new journal entries so spent a half-hour or so waking up, then straight to the writing.

Drizzly drizzly day here so should be a great day for writing if I can just remember to take a half-hour break now and again. (grin) Sometimes I sit down to write and just go go go for two or three hours or more, then wonder why I'm tired and done-in with fuzzy eyeballs. So I'm trying to train myself to take time away from writing every hour or so to read or watch a TV show or something. (Reading for pleasure is vastly different re eye strain and every other way than writing.)

The novel's still humming right along. Earlier I said I hoped the novel would be 500,000 words so I wouldn't have to go through a few days of hell while trying to decide on the next project. I was joking, but the way this thing is flowing it might make it that far. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3395
Blog(s): 239

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542

Total fiction words for the month..... 66,705 (very pleased with this, and still one day to go)
Total fiction words for the year..... 66,705
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014... 300,917

January 31, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:25. A few interesting emails, requests to handle, etc. There were a couple of good journal entries.

Congrats to Alison for realizing what's possible when WITD, and congrats on starting a new project. Ann's post brought up an interesting question. This journal is more for reporting progress, not so much for posting stories, but I have another website at http://hstanbrough.org called Arizona Pro Writers. Please go take a look, and if ANY of you would like to post your stories there, please feel free. Just let me know so I can create a username and password for you. You could use it as a showcase or to request feedback if that's your thing. Many of those for whom I first opened the site are no longer using it. So again, just let me know.

I think I talked a bit about pricing before, but it's been awhile. Here's what I do, and these are all for ebooks.

- Under 3,000 words, $.99.
- Up to 10,000 words, $2.99.
- Up to 19,999 words, $3.99.

- Up to 39,999 words, $4.99.
- Up to 69,999 words, $5.99.
- Over that, $6.99 and up. (The Wes Crowley Trilogy, at 116,000 words, is $9.99.)

For pricing paper, I use this Royalty Calculator and set the price so the royalty in the Expanded Distribution channel is at least $2. The paper prices feel high, but in many venues the paper version is listed alongside the ebook version and the former drives more readers to the latter. Much of this stuff is the result of studying DWS' success over the years.

Speaking of DWS, I have to say, I have a little bit of a good feeling when I can see him struggling with critical mind as he's writing or when he's trying to start a new project. That's the case the past few days with his new novel and actually was the case with finishing his previous novel.

The guy's published well over a hundred novels in the old traditional system plus a lot more since, plus filling his own magazine every month with an original novel and several short stories (Smith's Monthly).

So when someone that successful at WITD is still struggling with his own critical mind, it tells me it's all right to struggle, that struggling in no way means the journey is over. Is the payoff of writing like a wild man worth it when the struggle breaks free and I'm able to trust my subconscious, creative mind again? Oh absodamnlutely.

At 2:40 it wasn't raining so I went out to check the gauge. The level is currently just below 1 3/4 inches. Good soaking rain, and supposed to be more of the same today. I'm tired of rain. I could never live in Seattle. But yesterday was good because it gave me an excuse to do nothing but write and as background "white" noise the constant light thrumming on the roof was great. I hope for more of the same today.

Have to write the short story for the week today or tomorrow, and as of this moment I have no idea what it'll be. Maybe it'll give folks a glimpse at Charlie Task and the novel I'm working on. (grin)

Still trying to remember to take a half-hour or longer break now and again.

I put up a draft of this early so I'd remember to add the links. Now I'm gonna go write. I'll post this at the end of the day. Happy writing!

Knocked out just over 1,000 words in a session, then came here to report. Decided to use the short story of the week as a teaser for the novel. I was going to excerpt it and not count the words, but it didn't work out that way. The short will be posted at http://hestanbrough.com sometime tomorrow (Sunday). If you enjoy psychological horror, you might like it. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4101
Blog(s): 692

Writing of "A View to the Curious" (short story of the week)..... 3120

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523

Total fiction words for the month..... 70,806 (Yes!)
Total fiction words for the year..... 70,806

Total fiction words since April 15, 2014… 305,018

February 1, 2015[edit]

February first already. Wow.

Rolled out a little early at just before 1:30. I dealt with a little email and was glad to see a couple of journal entries. I hope the rest of you are writing every chance you get.

One of the emails in my inbox this morning was Dr. Mardy's Quotes of the Week. If you don't get this and you enjoy great quotes, I recommend it. To check it out, send a blank email to drmardy-on@mail-list.com. It's free and you can always unsubscribe.

Although I was up early, I wheedled away the first two hours of the day on necessary (to me) administrative stuff. I updated all the vendor pages on my site to add the cover for the latest story of the week and to reflect the purchase links for the last few stories. The Smashwords link goes up the same day. The Amazon link goes up on the second day. All the others require a few days' lag time. Still, that's pretty impressive when you consider only a few months ago Apple required up to six weeks.

The story you publish on Monday can be read in India, China, Australia and practically anywhere else in the world in any electronic venue by Friday. Pretty amazing stuff. That's why I really don't mind taking the time to update all my stuff about once a week. (grin)

Pretty good post today over at DWS. To see it click http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-6-day-31/. He talks about doing a self-assessment when you don't reach your own writing goals. Food for thought. For his own fiction word count, he said he had 52,100 words in January this year, but that was a success when he compared it to the 34,150 words he generated in January 2014. I don't wish low word counts on anyone, but as I've said here before, knowing a guy who's been doing this for thirty-plus years still struggles sometimes makes me feel that much better. Frankly, sometimes it keeps me from throwing in the towel.

That's another place I think Dean is absolutely right on the money. Writing should be fun, period. Sitting around making up stories is literally the most fun I can imagine, though certainly sometimes I need to take a break and do something else for awhile. But if writing ISN'T fun, he also says Why do it? I have to agree. I think if writing ever stopped being fun for me, I'd just dump it and go find something else to do that I actually enjoy. It all comes under that "Life's Too Short" category.

Great start (for me) for February, and the story's just pulling me through it. Absolutely incredible.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3362
Blog(s): 492

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date…… 4052
Day 2…… 3095 words. Total words to date…… 7147
Day 3…… 3363 words. Total words to date…… 10,542
Day 4…… 981 words. Total words to date…… 11,523
Day 5…… 3362 words. Total words to date…… 14,885

Total fiction words for the month…… 3,362
Total fiction words for the year…… 74,168
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 308,380

February 2, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little late at 3. I dealt with a little email and was glad to see a few journal entries. I hope the rest of you are writing every chance you get.

A little more business stuff this morning… I tried an experiment awhile back on advice of a friend. Instead of offering the full text of my posts (both nonficiton at HarveyStanbrough.com and the free story of the week at HEStanbrough.com), I changed it so only an excerpt goes out in the email. The reasoning and hope was that the recipients would click through to the site to read the rest of the content.

As I probably should have expected, the strategy worked on the nonfiction posts but not on the fiction site. Does that mean nobody wants to read my stories? Not at all. It means they don't want to take the extra step to get to something that's strictly for entertainment. It has no real value to them.

Looking back at stats, I averaged three times more click-throughs when I sent the full story out in the email. Weird, eh? Now, because the sole purpose of publishing a free short story every week in the first place is to get readers interested in my fiction, I'm going back to sending the full story in the email beginning today. And I'm gonna beef up HarveyStanbrough.com so when they do click through they'll find more than they bargained for maybe. (grin)

Oh, and if you like good psychological horror and would like an advance glimpse of the main character in Eric Stringer's forthcoming novel, visit http://hestanbrough.com anytime today. It's incredible fun writing this novel, which I'm beginning to think might be divided into chapters. If you want to see what I mean by it being fun, read the free story.

I experienced a rough night last night so my head hasn't worked well most of the day. Too little sleep. Tried to walk, but cut that short. Came back here, sat, showered, and finally created a few ebook covers for a friend, gratis, mostly to see whether I wanted to stick my hand back into that morass.

I worked up a "look" first, a relatively standardized way to brand her books. It felt good, working with covers again, so I've decided to design ebook covers for others for $30 each, and you can owe me if you want. If you want examples, visit my website at HEStanbrough.com. (Dawn, your covers are great, so this offer does not extend to you. (grin))

You have to provide the cover art, though I'll advise you if you want. Most writers are absolutely awful at picking out cover art. I'll be putting a page on the website again soon about this, but wanted you guys to know first. (Ann, this in no way has anything to do with your cover. Just timing. (grin))

Also, I know Deb Lewis will work with my files to create paper book covers for you as well. So if you need covers and you don't know how to do it or that isn't your "bent," let me or Deb put a cover together for you, or even a whole brand like I did earlier today.

Despite being sick last night and various stuff through the day today, a fairly good writing day. In fact, the writing was going so well (I started late), I wrote away the first 15 minutes of the only TV show I watch regularly. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1402
Blog(s): 647

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date…… 4052
Day 2…… 3095 words. Total words to date…… 7147
Day 3…… 3363 words. Total words to date…… 10,542

Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287

Total fiction words for the month..... 4,764
Total fiction words for the year..... 75,570
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 309,782

February 3, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Still not fully well, but with the baby Siamese sleeping sideways (if you have cats, you know how they kick) it was get up or fall out. There were a few good emails, a couple good journal entries.

I'm the new prez down at the San Pedro Valley Arts & Historical Society (trust me, I was roped into it) so have a meeting today at 10. Good thing about me being prez is that the meetings don't run on endlessly because I know blather when I hear it, and it strictly is not allowed. "Point of order: Shut up!" Stuff like that.

Among the very few truisms about our profession (writing), the foremost is that a writer should never stop learning. To that end, I offer the following:

Great blog post over at http://www.stevenpressfield.com/2015/01/killer-scenes/. The scene is the single most important element of the story (of any length) and this is a great post on scenes and other things. So go, read. If you're a writer and you aren't familiar with Steven Pressfield, you should be. I still recommend his two books, *The War of Art* and *Doing the Work*. Among a b'jillion other great things he's written, his debut novel was *The Legend of Bagger Vance*.

The following are the blogs I visit regularly. If you know of others that you consider invaluable, please let me know. If you don't want to leave the URL in a comment or in a post, send me an email. Please.

http://www.deanwesleysmith.com (read every day)
http://www.stevenpressfield.com/category/writing-wednesdays/ (skim every day, read sometimes)
http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/ (check every day, but he doesn't post often)
http://terribleminds.com/ramble/blog/ (check but seldom read, see note below)

The last one, Wendig's blog, is definitely an acquired taste. Plus, and more importantly, you have to weed out the bad advice he slips into his posts occasionally. Like he'll say things about how important it is to rewrite. Ummm, No. This one I read mostly for when he posts "idea generators," usually along with a flash-fiction challenge.

I don't follow http://www.thepassivevoice.com/ but DWS swears by it. Might be something to look at and then decide whether it's of any value to you.

Finally, I recommend checking out http://www.openculture.com/. You might find it of use. Don't skip the free resources in the middle column (Essentials, Free Online Courses, etc.). As a writer, I'm especially interested in the Astronomy Courses, Classics Courses, Physics Courses, and Psychology & Neuroscience Courses. There are also free textbooks. You're a writer, right? What do you NOT want to know? (Note that on each page, the horizontal tabs that begin with "Free Online Education" are Yahoo ads. Scroll down a bit to get to the meat.)

Well, there I was. It was 4 p.m. and I was all set to finish this journal entry and just say I let the day get away from me. I was gonna say I guess I should have just stayed in and written, but I went for a walk. That afterward I came back here and thought more about the board meeting I presided over this morning, looked over some stuff from it, and wound up just blowing off the day. That there had been zero fiction

writing today, that I didn't even open the writing 'puter, but tomorrow, oh buddy, tomorrow I plan to write, write, write. We'll see. Because you know, I hate playing catch-up, but that's one good thing about having a daily goal. It re-sets every morning, right? Right.

But then a weird thing happened. I still had an hour before NYPD Blue, so I turned to my writing 'puter, opened it, put my fingers on the keyboard and just wrote the first thing that flowed out of them.

Kids, today I am the poster child for trusting the subconscious and just writing off into the dark. Below are the results. Will I take it? Umm, yeah. Actually, it's a little disturbing that this is so easy for me to write.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1322
Blog(s): 744

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609

Total fiction words for the month..... 6,086
Total fiction words for the year..... 76,892
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 311,104

February 4, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:15. Answered a couple emails, a journal entry.

Still shaking the dust off from the board meeting yesterday. Not sure how I allowed the former director to rope me into this. I love being in charge of things, but am not a big "rule by committee" type. Ugh. Well, it'll be what it'll be, as long as it doesn't interfere with my writing. In a way it helps. I get up way early after all, and if I feel pressure to do some things for the museum, that might spur me to write earlier and reach my daily goal sooner.

This morning, for example, as I write this I've been up almost three and a half hours and I've turned out 2366 words. And that included a LOT of cycling back to add or enhance necessary description, add a short flashback scene, etc. So I should far exceed my daily goal of 3,000 words per day.

The overall story of the novel is taking more firm shape too. I'm starting to see that it's going to be pretty much a chronological account but still seems like it's going to be both a coherent novel and a collection of stand-alone short stories. I probably won't advertise the stand-alone short stories. The reader who finds them will have discovered a bonus. (grin) This is my first psychological horror / psychological thriller so it's all about scenes and sequences and pacing, pacing, pacing.

I mentioned yesterday that a professional writer should never stop learning. I failed to mention the primary avenue to learning, though: Writing More Stuff. The learning curve is part of the great fun I'm having as I write this current novel.

I downloaded five free PDF textbooks yesterday from http://www.openculture.com/ too. I look forward to reading over those as a rest from writing and as time permits.

Well, I'm gonna call it a little early and go sit and chill for awhile. The day didn't end as well as it began, but again, I'll take it. Novel's on track and running, so it's all good. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3143
Blog(s): 435

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752

Total fiction words for the month..... 9,229
Total fiction words for the year..... 80,035
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 314,247

February 5, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Not feeling well today. Answered a couple emails, a journal entry.

One email was very interesting to me, partly because it gave me an excuse to rant a bit, by way of offering a trim slice of education. A couple of my friends wanted to know about hyphens, especially as concerns using them with phrases like "year-old" and "number-year-old."

Several years ago, a writer pointed out to me that Chicago Manual of Style says you should always hyphenate "year-old" and "number-year-old."

When a noun follows either of those sequences, meaning the sequence forms a single compound adjective, hyphenating it would be all right.

However, because most writers don't have the foggiest freaking notion that they're even dealing with an actual language that consists of letters and sounds, much less a desire to respect that language, they expanded that to include hyphenating those words in all forms all the time.

This is especially true of the wannabe variety, those who believe "anyone can write." Most often, they also believe they know everything there is to know, you can teach them nothing they don't already know, and anything at all you try to say to them must be a scam, even if you show them in numbers that your proposal would actually save them money.

As a result I've seen things like "Johnny was six-years-old" or "Stacy's party was attended by several three-year-olds." Ugh. The "right" form would be "Johnny was a six-year-old boy." But even that isn't necessary.

Well, being a writer who most often prefers to use my own mind rather than simply accepting what I'm told as if someone else actually knows more than I do, I thought, *Wait a minute. The purpose of hyphenation is to force the reader to read the hyphenated passage as one word. Is it necessary in this case?*

And that's been my position ever since. If you want the reader to pronounce a pair of words or series of words as one word, hyphenate. If you don't, don't. There are a couple of shortcuts:

- Always use a hyphen after “half” or “self” or “ex” if it’s used as a prefix.
- Always hyphenate numbers and fractions that consist of two words, such as twenty-three or three-fourths or nine-tenths

Frankly, style manuals are wonderful if you’re writing an article or essay for a newspaper. In that case, *and only in that case*, you should follow whatever style manual that publication uses.

However, if you’re a fictionist, you have no business paying the slightest bit of attention to any “official” style manual, at all, ever, period. If you’re submitting fiction to a traditional market who, in their guidelines, says you must follow Chicago Manual or any other style manual, ignore it. If they are anal enough to check and then to try to hold you to it, I recommend becoming verbally abusive and making derogatory references regarding their parentage and their mental capacity.

Then tell them you can’t allow them to publish your work unless they will sign a contract agreeing to pay you $1,000 per word with all rights reverting to you within ten seconds of publication.

Now, if you’re writing a series of books or stories, I do recommend creating your own style sheet to be sure you keep names, nicknames, etc. consistent through the series.

For example, in a wonderful SF series I edited several years ago, the protagonist’s nickname was The Angel. Some places the author had capitalized it like that, and in other places he’d written “the Angel.” I changed all of them to the capitalized version for consistency.

For another example, one of the weapons that was used through that series was the Thorington Laser Rifle. The author always capitalized Thorington, but the other two words were capitalized sometimes and not at other times. Again, we standardized it.

There were six novels and each novel was well over 100,000 words, so this style sheet was a wonderful time saver. So do that. But “official” style manuals? No.

Pretty good day of writing and I still don’t feel worth a flip, so I’m gonna knock off and prep my next five-story collection. It’s called Curious Tales. It will be out in ebook later today or tomorrow, and it probably will be out in print in a week or so.

Today’s Writing
Fiction words: 3508
Blog(s): 817

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer’s first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260 151

Total fiction words for the month..... 13,437
Total fiction words for the year..... 83,543
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 317,755

February 6, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30. Answered a couple emails, a journal entry.

Got Curious Tales up and published to Smashwords and Amazon yesterday, and especially enjoyed putting together the cover.

Not much to talk about today. Didn't have nearly as good a day of writing today as I should have either, but not a bad average (over 2500 per day) for only 10 days of writing, so I'll take it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1102
Blog(s): 170

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362

Total fiction words for the month..... 14,539
Total fiction words for the year..... 84,555
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 318,857

February 7, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 3:45 this morning, way late for me. Sorry I even bothered to look at email.

There were like a b'jillion emails on there (okay, only about 23) from other board members from this stupid board to which I let myself be nominated and elected president. I swear to every god out there it's like trying to herd two year olds with toothaches and six legs each.

There was a problem down there, and as president I thought my job was to don my armor, slap myself atop a rearing white steed, and ride in there and fix it for them.

Well, that's when the yelling started, and it was all directed at Me.

I liken it to a group of poor villagers scraping up all their money (zero) and standing with their weather beaten, dusty hats at their chest with their barefoot, dusty wife and children huddled behind them, beseeching you, nay *begging* you, to *please* help them prevail against the forces of evil.

And you agree because, you know, you're a moron.

And the forces of evil attack, and you attack back, only to find all the villagers lined up behind you throwing rocks... AT YOU. And suddenly they have you in a crossfire, and they're all yelling, "Yes, it's a force of evil, but it's OUR force of evil and we love it! How dare you try to save us from what we've brought upon ourselves?"

So today, after I returned from a few hour trip to Sierra Vista, which, I kid you not, I took JUST to escape

the madness for a little while, I wrote the majority of my word output for today, a nonfiction email of 1776 words (an appropriate number to claim my independence, no?) to say, basically, "I quit. Good luck."

Then I wheeled my white steed around and rode right the hell out of there.

So I'll be back to writing tomorrow. Seriously. After dealing with that bunch, I'm SO looking forward to spending some time with Eric Stringer and Charlie C. Task.

For today, no new word count. Everything's the same, except I'm a day older with nothing to show for it but a larger hole in my gut.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: el zippo
Blog(s): 422

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 10… 1102 words. Total words to date…… 25,362
(Back tomorrow with Day 11. I don't record days I don't write.)

Total fiction words for the month…… 14,539
Total fiction words for the year…… 84,555
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 318,857

February 8, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30. SO glad to know I can look forward to a day of normalcy, for me. So checked emails, then a journal entry and a couple comments on mine. How about that Roger yesterday, eh? Great numbers.

I was just about to run out to play with Charlie and friends, but I realized this is Sunday and I haven't written the story of the week yet. Oops. Guess maybe I'd better concentrate on that. (grin) Back later.

Got a LOT of writing done today, but not a new word on the novel. That's kind of annoying. I might work the story of the week into the novel later since it's another Charlie Task story, but I don't think it really fits the novel. Anyway….

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 5373
Blog(s): 167

Writing of "The Ethics of Murder" (story of the week)…… 3806

Writing of "Banditos" (another short story I started)… 1567

Total fiction words for the month…… 19,912
Total fiction words for the year…… 89,828
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 324,230

February 9, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 3. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

I had a good day for numbers yesterday, but wasn't pleased. I started a story cold for the story of the week,

but it stalled. I counted the words because I wrote them. There's a good seed there and I think it will show up again later as a story, and maybe two stories. So I kept the seed but I threw out the rest.

Anyway, the second story I started ran away with me. It was great fun. I like that it was another Charlie Task story but one I'm certain will not be part of the novel I'm currently working on. MailChimp will send it out later this morning but it's on the site now.

Now I get to run and play with Charlie and friends for awhile. (grin) Back later.

Not a lot of writing done today, but back into the novel and loving it. Great fun. This is what writing is supposed to be. I hope all of you have it too. I hope all of you learn to Just Let Go and have fun. If you're frowning when you're writing, you're doing something wrong.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1704
Blog(s): 279

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066

Total fiction words for the month..... 21,616
Total fiction words for the year..... 91,532
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 325,934

February 10, 2015[edit]

Rolled out late at 3:30. Rough night. Anyway, checked emails, then some journal stuff.

I visited a few of the sites in my Read folder. Found some more invaluable stuff. If you don't subscribe to StevenPressfield.com, I recommend it. On the tab labeled The Series, check out his Writing Wednesdays category and his What It Takes categories. In the latter, I was heartened by "Art and Polarity," by Shawn Coyne. Excellent stuff and hyper appropriate.

I think DWS is coming back after a placeholder absence due primarily to his cable and Internet provider screwing up. Should be some good stuff there in coming days.

I hope for a good day for numbers today, but we'll have to wait and see. Even as much fun as I'm having when I'm in the story with Charlie, the last few days I've squandered my early morning quiet time on writing-related tasks and learning rather than writing. Gotta get back in the habit. Might have to forego my walk today to spend some quality time in the chair.

Also have a new short story seed buzzing around in my head. *(Personal to Roger: This one is not from our buddy Charlie. I think it'll be SF set in that place in my magic realism world where imagination folds into reality.)* But again, we'll have to see what happens.

Okay, somewhere around mid-morning after 822 new words, I realized I was writing two different books. The first, in which the adult Charlie Task is speaking directly to the reader, was serving as sort of the introduction to the other, in which a third-person narrator is telling the story of a much younger Charlie Task. I'm going to have to separate them from each other, and better now than later.

So for now, for this book, I just decided to throw out the "introduction" and move ahead with the rest. So I'm cutting the first 13,676 words, roughly half of what I've written. I have to admit, it isn't easy. I've cut beginnings and thrown them out before, but never a chunk this big. That's what I get, I suppose, for working with a psychopath.

The adjusted total is shown below after yesterday's novel numbers. That's what I'm restarting with today.

Guess I'd better get back to it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1429
Blog(s): 618

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819

Total fiction words for the month..... 23,045
Total fiction words for the year..... 92,961
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 327,363

February 11, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

Started writing at about 4 after some messing around. Almost 2000 words, then interrupted for a couple hours. During that time I read the blog posts I hit regularly and went to a photo source and downloaded 16 new pics as potential book covers. By the way, DWS has a great post today. Scroll down to the Topic of the Night there. It's all about commitment. Good stuff.

Also good stuff on Steven Pressfield's blog, all about writing killer scenes. NOTE: If you're a proponent and practitioner of WITD, take what he says there with a grain of salt.

Be forwarned, Chuck Wendig uses extremely bad language and he uses it gratuitously. That said, he wrote A Blog Post You Should Read if you constantly pre-reject your own manuscripts instead of sending them out (or not publishing them) and risking rejection from someone else. Also if you feel you aren't a good writer, you aren't worthy, blah blah blah, Read This One Too. Same potty mouth warning applies.

Okay, so after I did all that, I came here to write this.

I hope for all of you that you're writing off into the dark. I hope you're just typing as fast as you can whatever flows out of your fingers. If it's good enough for Bradbury, it's good enough for me. I hope you're down in the story, racing along with the characters rather than directing the action as the almighty Writer on High. (grin)

Now I'm gonna get back to it myself and see how many more new words I can add before I run out of steam.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4068
Blog(s): 402

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887

Total fiction words for the month..... 27,113
Total fiction words for the year..... 97,029
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 331,431

February 12, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 2:30. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

If you are still considering even at the edges of your consciousness publishing with a traditional publisher, I encourage you to read Joe Konrath's Blog Post.

Hey, you wanna see some really great writing? Check out Bruce Weber's Blog.

I had a good writing day today for the second day in a row. I gotta tell you, it's wonderful when it's flowing the way this is flowing. And it's flowing because I'm learning more and more to Just Trust Myself.

If you're reading this, I taught you either directly or through my audio lecture on WITD all the tools you need to have fun with your writing and love the process. If you aren't there yet and you want to talk about it, email me. If you've been there but can't keep it going and you want to talk about it, email me. I'd love to help.

Frankly, it just flat kills me that so many from the dedicated group that came to me eager to learn WITD are letting it slide or even shoving their writing down to a low priority. I mean, if that's what you want to do, that's perfectly fine. It just isn't what I expected from a group that was so very fired up. Anyway, I'm here. You need help, holler. Otherwise I'll just keep my own fingers on the keyboard and try to mind my own business.

Okay, my numbers for the day.....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4104
Blog(s): 379

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991

Total fiction words for the month..... 31,217
Total fiction words for the year..... 101,133
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 335,535

February 13, 2015[edit]

Rolled out about 1:45. Cool! Checked emails, then some journal stuff, cleaned up my desktop.

Well, major change happens. For some reason, not quite 1000 new words into my WIP, Microsoft Word 2010 stopped working on my little writing 'puter. So fiddling with that for awhile.

I still have disks for Office 97 and Office 2003, so maybe I'll try them. First I'm uninstalling 2010. Oh, I did save my WIP to my flash drive just before 2010 stopped working, so worst case scenario I'll transfer it to my work laptop and continue there.

Okay. Now I'm using Office 2003 on my writing 'puter. I've already bought a subscription to Office 365 (Office 2013) but it won't fit on my little computer. No biggie. Back to writing.

My numbers today will be a bit misleading, by which I mean I've done a lot more work than the word count indicates. In the past two days I wrote over 8,000 words, but this morning I decided to let Charlie tell his own story.

So I spent part of my writing time today reading through, changing third-person narrative to first-person narrative. (No, not present tense.) And did it one word at a time instead of attempting to just change all instances of "he" to "I" and so on. That doesn't work and it's lazy. And I did it all in Creative Voice. (grin)

Didn't quite make my 3,000 words today, but I'm pleased with where everything is. Great fun. And from here on out, I can just lay my ears back and write. I only hope I can get it on the screen as fast as Charlie puts it out there for me.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2867

Blog(s): 421

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858

Total fiction words for the month..... 34,084
Total fiction words for the year..... 104,000
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 338,402

February 14, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3. Checked emails, then some journal stuff. Dawn, keep charging!

Liking Office 2003. I'd forgotten how much simpler it is to use. Have to get done early anything I'm going to do today so I'd better get at it. Happy Fake Holiday to everyone. (grin)

Finished cleaning up the change-over from third-person to first-person narrative in the current WIP and knocked out not quite 2000 new words.

If any of you remember my treacherous friend Mac from *Leaving Amarillo*, I got a wild hair today and headed off to look for Mac's ranch site on the San Pedro River.

Sort'a kind'a thought I'd found it, but when I got back to the house with my USGS map (it's going with me next time), I found out I hadn't quite gotten there. I was short by about a half-mile, but I'm going back on Tuesday to nail it down. I can hardly wait.

Mac and Wes and Ben are real to me, and it will be exciting for me to stand where Wes last saw Mac as Mac died.

In the meantime, I'm pooped, so I'm gonna call it a day, watch a movie or something.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1948
Blog(s): 336

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523

Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806

Total fiction words for the month..... 36,032
Total fiction words for the year..... 105,948 (*This is incredible to me. One of my mentors, SF Grand Master Jack Williamson, once said he just couldn't manage writing more than 100,000 words per year.*)
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 340,350

February 15, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3. Checked emails, then some journal stuff. Alison, safe journey east.

For the second week in a row, I nearly forgot Monday's almost here. (grin) Guess I'd better write the story of the week today, then get back to Charlie's story.

Got it done at a little over 2300 words and it's actually humor, albeit written by Eric Stringer. The guy just gets Unusualer and unusualer. Got it posted to the site. It's there now. Go read it. I command you. Or wait 'til tomorrow when MailChimp mails it out to you. Or blow it off, I don't care.

Got the cover done, got the story published to Smashwords and Amazon, updated all my vendor pages on the site. Eighty short stories up there now. Eighty covers. Plus the novels, the novella, the collections. Wow.

Okay, DWS finally got the first post up in his new Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing series. Click Here to Read It, especially if you ever wondered why novels are "supposed" to be a certain length.

Wanted to get back on the novel today, planned it, didn't do it. Started reading some research stuff, got sidetracked and toasted my widdle head. So no more writing until tomorrow morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2348
Blog(s): 371

Writing of "The Passing of Rosario" (story of the week)..... 2348

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609

Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XX,XXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 38,380
Total fiction words for the year..... 108,296
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 342,698

February 16, 2015[edit]

Rolled out around 3:40 this morning. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

Due to some physical problems I had a pretty rough night. I was too tired and sore today to do much other than sit around. Definitely did not want to get seriously back into the novel today while I was feeling so crappy, so I did some admin stuff instead on the websites. Back to the novel tomorrow.

Today most notably, I added Writing Off Into the Dark back into the lineup as an audio lecture. If you know anyone who might be interested, please let them know. They can get all the information on all the lectures at http://harveystanbrough.com/lecture-series.

So just a little writing today, mostly in small increments, a half-hour here, a quarter-hour there. I'm headed to the couch for a bit and then bed and then up and writing and then a trek to find Mac's house in the bend of the river either tomorrow or Wednesday.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1467
Blog(s): 317

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273

Total fiction words for the month..... 39,847
Total fiction words for the year..... 109,763
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 344,165

February 17, 2015[edit]

Rolled out around 2:30 this morning. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

Okay, Wendig is just insane. I won't visit his blog anymore, nor will I recommend it. The guy's a major suck-up, and it's annoying. Plus he gets kind'a touchy when anyone disagrees with him.

His current post has to do with strong female characters, oh, except that you can't qualify them as "strong" because that word has too many male connotations so instead you have to "give them agency" and blah blah blah. Holy crap. And wholly crap.

Do I have something against strong female characters? Hell no. I have something against the writer acting as a god, making sure a female character is the prime mover in the story (even if it's a story about a Scout/Sniper unit in the Marine Corps, in which currently there are no women serving) and all the males (if you're un-PC enough to even allow any) are absolutely weak and fawning like 17th century fops. That's what I'm against.

Wait. I have an idea. How about we let the writers decide what they want to write instead of trying to censor them? And how about in ALL stories we just let ALL of the characters simply be who they are? How about that?

It isn't an either-or world, folks. Despite what Wendig or any other PC Morons say, a woman (and a female character) CAN be strong AND an object of sexual desire AND someone whom a man (or male character) wants to protect should HE think the need arises.

When a man (or male character) does something to protect a woman (or female character), that isn't because she can't protect herself and it isn't because he assumes she can't protect herself. It's because the instinctive, biological urge that runs through men, whether or not they deny it or lie about it, is to have sex with females and to protect females. It's what guys want, and everybody knows it. If they didn't, none of us would be here today, so there.

Now, you want your fiction to be like real life or do you want it to be PC?

The point is, you have the right to choose. If YOU want YOUR fiction to be strictly Politically Correct, that's fine, really. I applaud your (ahem) choice to (ahem, ahem) "take a stand". But you have the right to choose for YOU, not for me or anybody else.

Okay, I know whereof I speak. There were several strong female characters in my Wes Crowley series, and I didn't conjure them up intentionally in order to be politically correct. I wrote what they said and did as they came into the story on their own.

One was a prime mover of the story early. She was relatively demure, but down to earth and very strong. (She had a great deal of "agency," I think, although she never sold a house and never worked for the CIA that I'm aware.)

Another was a prime mover of the story that continued after the third book ended. She quite literally burst through the door into a quiet, semi-formal initial meeting, half-frightened and half-angered that I was going to leave her out of the book.

And three others were strong but had only incidental, catalyst roles to play. Can a character be a strong character and still play only as a catalyst? Sure. Why not? Don't you know humans who do that?

Okay, so enough bending your ear about all this. I know I'm preaching to the choir here anyway. Consider it a practice sermon. I'm pretty sure this one will end up over on my main blog sometime down the line.

I walked today. And walked. And walked. Logged 9 miles (but maybe 8 or 8.5 as my pedometer is a bit off) in search of Mac's house in the bend along the river. I have some bad news and some good news.

The bad new first: the house wasn't at the big bend in the river that I'd marked on the map. The area of that bend alone was roughly 1/2 mile by 1/2 mile and nobody, but nobody, would put a house in there. The terrain sucked canal water from all 50 states, yes, including Hawaii. That's a (very) small ranch of 320 square acres (a half-section) all by itself IF you didn't mind chasing cattle up and down lava-rock hills, etc. Been there, done that, got the t-shirt and the big hat.

The good news is that Mac's place was where I thought it was the other day when I was out there. So yay. I stopped there again today. I could see the house, the outbuildings, and the corral. I could see where buggies and horses pulled up in front of the house. I saw where Mac died in Wes' arms. It was an emotional experience. How weird am I? (grin) Anyway, all happy now.

Not much writing today. I was out most of the day chasing Mac's ghost, and since he was on horseback and I was on foot… well, let's just say he won.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1153
Blog(s): 1010

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date…… 4052
Day 2…… 3095 words. Total words to date…… 7147
Day 3…… 3363 words. Total words to date…… 10,542
Day 4…… 981 words. Total words to date…… 11,523
Day 5…… 3362 words. Total words to date…… 14,885
Day 6…… 1402 words. Total words to date…… 16,287
Day 7…… 1322 words. Total words to date…… 17,609
Day 8…… 3143 words. Total words to date…… 20,752
Day 9…… 3357 words. Total words to date…… 24,260
Day 10… 1102 words. Total words to date…… 25,362
Day 11… 1704 words. Total words to date…… 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12… 1429 words. Total words to date…… 14,819
Day 13… 4068 words. Total words to date…… 18,887
Day 14… 4104 words. Total words to date…… 22,991
Day 15… 2867 words. Total words to date…… 25,858
Day 16… 1948 words. Total words to date…… 27,806
Day 17… 1467 words. Total words to date…… 29,273
Day 18… 1153 words. Total words to date…… 30,426

Total fiction words for the month…… 41,000 (weird)
Total fiction words for the year…… 110,916
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 345,318

February 18, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 2 this morning. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

Taking a day off of walking today. My legs are about 32 but the rest of me is considerably older, and it doesn't like me allowing my legs to abuse it. (grin) But that's okay. Today I stay in and write.

I'll be cycling some today so no telling what the word count will be. I'm very excited about my WIP (Eric's first novel) so I'm learning even more about my own writing as I go.

DWS talks often about the writer's need to practice. Rather than treading water, staying in one spot and writing and rewriting and rewriting etc. trying to "perfect" one work, he suggests writers, Like All Other Artists, should practice. How?

- Write what you have to write and submit it or publish it.
- Write the next thing you have to write, and while you're writing it, focus on a particular technique that you want to absorb and master.
- Then, each time you write something new, focus on another technique.

For example, focus on using all five senses in your current short story or novel. Once you get that down so you're doing it without thinking about it, in your next WIP focus on "focusing down" in setting to ground the reader in the setting. In the next WIP focus on something else, then something else, etc.

That's how you practice as a writer. In the meantime, your body of work is growing and your writing is improving.

My current focus is on writing great opening lines. I try to do that for each scene and/or chapter. In fact, on advice of a Facebook friend (one I actually know) I recently submitted a few opening lines to a contest. To see the contest and all that, Visit This Link. It's free to enter and they pay up to 10 cents per word.

So as your writing improves should you go back and rewrite something you've already published? No.

I mean, of course you may do whatever you want, but I won't. Some readers are already enjoying those stories. If I pull them down and issue a new, improved version, that will serve only to insult the reader for having bought the "worse" version.

Nah, just keep building your body of work. Readers who liked your earlier work will like the later stuff even more.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3152
Blog(s): 568

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991

Day 15… 2867 words. Total words to date…… 25,858
Day 16… 1948 words. Total words to date…… 27,806
Day 17… 1467 words. Total words to date…… 29,273
Day 18… 1153 words. Total words to date…… 30,426
Day 19… 3152 words. Total words to date…… 33,578

Total fiction words for the month…… 44,152 (weird)
Total fiction words for the year…… 114,068
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 348,470

February 19, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 2 again this morning. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

Well, not sure what this novel's wanting to do. When it started it was going to be Charlie Task, with Eric Stringer giving him voice, telling a film crew (and you) what it's like to be a psychopath. It was to be the early part of his autobiography.

Somewhere along the way it took a jag and started being a collection of stories, which isn't all bad for an autobiography, but it's also supposed to be a novel. (Yes, it's Charlie's autobiography, but he insisted it be "officially" a novel. Legal issues, you know.)

So I think Eric and Charlie need to make up their minds where it's going and what it's going to be. I'll give it another day or two and then we'll see. I've thrown down the gauntlet. Now I'll see whether either of them will pick it up. If I get knocked off in the next day or two, you'll know what happened.

Fairly good day writing today despite arguing with the persona and the character, both of whom are considerably more real than I on any given day.

Oh, I'm teaching one more session of Writing the Character Driven Story (any length) in Tucson at my old venue on Saturday, March 28. If any of you want in, let me know. If you know anyone who might want in, please let them know to contact me. The cost is $80. It runs all day.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1806
Blog(s): 428

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date…… 4052
Day 2…… 3095 words. Total words to date…… 7147
Day 3…… 3363 words. Total words to date…… 10,542
Day 4…… 981 words. Total words to date…… 11,523
Day 5…… 3362 words. Total words to date…… 14,885
Day 6…… 1402 words. Total words to date…… 16,287
Day 7…… 1322 words. Total words to date…… 17,609
Day 8…… 3143 words. Total words to date…… 20,752
Day 9…… 3357 words. Total words to date…… 24,260
Day 10… 1102 words. Total words to date…… 25,362
Day 11… 1704 words. Total words to date…… 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12… 1429 words. Total words to date…… 14,819
Day 13… 4068 words. Total words to date…… 18,887
Day 14… 4104 words. Total words to date…… 22,991
Day 15… 2867 words. Total words to date…… 25,858
Day 16… 1948 words. Total words to date…… 27,806

Day 17… 1467 words. Total words to date…… 29,273
Day 18… 1153 words. Total words to date…… 30,426
Day 19… 3152 words. Total words to date…… 33,578
Day 20… 1806 words. Total words to date…… 35,384

Total fiction words for the month…… 45,958
Total fiction words for the year…… 115,874
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 350,276

February 20, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 2 yet again. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

I spent some time on my big blog this morning, revising the post for tomorrow and the one for March 1.

I also wrote a new "intermediate" post for February 26. Just humor. Not part of the regular posts that come out every ten days. I don't doubt for a second, though, that yelling and screaming shall ensue. (grin)

Yea, though I shall be called a hater I shall go forth and make writers of men and women and what children I am able to gather unto me before English teachers lay upon them the myths from which they can practically never extricate themselves. Oh, and I shall have a ball doing it. Verily.

Not a great day writing on the novel, but it's moving a bit. We'll see.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1651
Blog(s): 1457 (323 here)

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1…… 4052 words. Total words to date…… 4052
Day 2…… 3095 words. Total words to date…… 7147
Day 3…… 3363 words. Total words to date…… 10,542
Day 4…… 981 words. Total words to date…… 11,523
Day 5…… 3362 words. Total words to date…… 14,885
Day 6…… 1402 words. Total words to date…… 16,287
Day 7…… 1322 words. Total words to date…… 17,609
Day 8…… 3143 words. Total words to date…… 20,752
Day 9…… 3357 words. Total words to date…… 24,260
Day 10… 1102 words. Total words to date…… 25,362
Day 11… 1704 words. Total words to date…… 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12… 1429 words. Total words to date…… 14,819
Day 13… 4068 words. Total words to date…… 18,887
Day 14… 4104 words. Total words to date…… 22,991
Day 15… 2867 words. Total words to date…… 25,858
Day 16… 1948 words. Total words to date…… 27,806
Day 17… 1467 words. Total words to date…… 29,273
Day 18… 1153 words. Total words to date…… 30,426
Day 19… 3152 words. Total words to date…… 33,578
Day 20… 1806 words. Total words to date…… 35,384
Day 21… 1651 words. Total words to date…… 36,035

Total fiction words for the month…… 47,609
Total fiction words for the year…… 117,525
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014…… 351,927

February 21, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little early this morning, just after 1 a.m. Checked emails, then some journal stuff.

Pretty good day writing on the novel. I also got the story of the week finished, but it's excerpted from the novel so I'm not counting the words separately, of course. (Raja, it's a note from your fave.)

Also updated my main website. I currently have 81 short story covers up on HEStanbrough.com and I was updating those times four at least once a week. I decided to move all my main stuff over to my main site at HarveyStanbrough.com. (HEStanbrough.com will still carry the new free story every week.)

I'll have all my fiction listed on only one page on my main site, and some other stuff as well. Drop by and take a look if you want at HarveyStanbrough.com.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3039
Blog(s): 343

Writing of "The Odd Task" (Yeah, it's Charlie) short story of the week (0 new extra words)

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074

Total fiction words for the month..... 50,648
Total fiction words for the year..... 120,564
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 354,966

February 22, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3 this morning, then spent an inordinate amount of time on email. Then I went and tweaked my main website a little more.

According to the email newsletter I receive from Dr. Mardy,

"[Victor Hugo] was one of history's most prolific writers, with a goal of producing 20 pages of prose or 100 lines of verse every single day. He developed a fascinating method to help him achieve the goal. Every morning, he gave all his clothes to his valet, who was instructed to return them only after Hugo had finished writing for the day."

Cool trick, eh? I guess first I need to find a valet. Of course, this story might rank right up there with Hemingway writing standing up and drunk etc.

The novel's going well but it seems to be going on forever. I'm cycling back a lot as I write this one and I'm looking forward to getting it finished, frankly, and getting on to something else. Who would've thought I'd feel like 23 days is an interminable amount of time to write a novel? And then I think of all those poor souls out there who feel they have to take at least a couple years to write one or it can't possibly be any good. Oof. I am a fortunate man. Still, I really need to put this one behind me. I'll be pushing over this next week.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2902

Writing of The Making of a Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
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Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976

Total fiction words for the month..... 53,550
Total fiction words for the year..... 123,466
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 357,868

February 23, 2015[edit]

Rolled out late this morning at almost 3:30. Checked email.

A guy I built a website for emailed to say his site was being bombarded with spam. I deleted close to 4,000 spam comments in the back end, but I have to wait until he sends me a password to get into his site and fix the problem up front. I mention this only because if you have a website and it's being nailed with a lot of spam, I can tell you how to make it stop. Just let me know.

Another dear friend who lives in Dallas sent me a poem. It's the same one he sent me FIFTEEN years ago this month as I was recuperating from The Ross Procedure, during which the doc replaced my pulmonic and aortic valves in a 7.5 hour operation that was originally scheduled for 4.5 hours. Robert just wanted to let me know he's glad I'm still around. Isn't that something? Thanks Robert.

While I was messing with such things, I tweaked HEStanbrough.com a bit. Then to the novel, hoping for a breakthrough day.

Not a breakthrough with numbers today, but Charlie told me today where the rest of it's going. I don't have the ending yet (that would be BOHOHOHOHOring), but I do have a couple or three scenes to write. MAN, I love writing scenes! (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2698

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976
Day 24... 2698 words. Total words to date..... 44,674

Total fiction words for the month..... 56,248
Total fiction words for the year..... 126,154
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 360,566

February 24, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 a.m. Checked email.

If I could assume the attitude of any other writer, it would be that of Ray Bradbury. I spent the first bit of my waking-up time this morning writing a blog post over on HarveyStanbrough.com on that very topic. It will post on March 5. Now to the novel.

Great writing day today, and when I stopped (NYPD Blue is coming on soon) I could have done at least

one more session. I'm totally psyched. Still have only the vaguest idea of an ending, but a new catalyst character just introduced himself, so tomorrow might be as good a writing day as today. Woohoo!

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 5214

Writing of **Confessions of a Professional Psychopath** (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976
Day 24... 2698 words. Total words to date..... 44,674
Day 25... 5214 words. Total words to date..... 49,888

Total fiction words for the month..... 61,462
Total fiction words for the year..... 131,368
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 365,780

February 25, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 a.m. again. Checked email.

Another fairly good writing day. I should be seeing the end of this one in the next day or two or three.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3467

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752

Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976
Day 24... 2698 words. Total words to date..... 44,674
Day 25... 5214 words. Total words to date..... 49,888
Day 26... 3467 words. Total words to date..... 53,355

Total fiction words for the month..... 64,929
Total fiction words for the year..... 134,835
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 369,347

February 26, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 a.m. again. Seem to be catching a habit. Checked email.

For those of you who heard me talk about "focusing down" to ground the reader in the scene in the Writing the Character Driven Story intensive, I found an excellent example.

One of the TV shows I watch in the evening is a sitcom called Modern Family. The writing is very good, though it's politically lopsided at times, and the cast is nothing short of incredible. (If you're interested, read their bios some time.) I predict this show will eventually rank up there among MASH and Seinfeld and Friends and a few other sitcoms where the convergence of writing and cast created a massive hit. (Another one currently running is The Middle, although one character in that show annoys me so much I sometimes would rather skip it.)

Anyway, as I mentioned during the writing intensive, one excellent way to ground the reader in the scene is to *focus down* on one part of the scene, something unusual (as in lifelike) with which the reader can relate.

In Modern Family, the writers regularly (every three or four shows) focus down on a loose stair. Every time the husband (Phil Dunphy, played by Ty Burrell) is hurrying up or down the stairs to get something or do something, and he stumbles. And every time he glances down and mumbles, "Gotta fix that step" or "Gotta fix that" and then goes on with what he was doing. I don't think I can remember even one time why he was going upstairs, but I always remember the loose step and it pulls me deeper into the show.

When his wife (Claire Dunphy, played by Julie Bowen) goes up the stairs, sometimes she hits the loose one and sometimes she doesn't. When she does, she just glances at the stair, then at the camera (ala Jack Benny) to convey her wifely displeasure that Phil hasn't repaired it yet.

Excellent writing. I recommend it.

Now to the novel.

Okay, been writing for an hour, played on Facebook a bit, then checked DWS website and found that he's put up a new lecture. If you believe reviews matter, you might want to check out his new Lecture on Reviews. Share this link with others if you think they'll find it valuable.

Dean's video lectures are not expensive and you can go back to watch them as often as you like. The vids are a little jumpy at times, but the info in the ones I've bought has been excellent. Just sayin'.

I won't be buying this one personally as I would rather spend my time writing than marketing or going after reviews, but if reviews are important to you, well, there y'go.

Back to the novel. Pretty good day of writing today. Interrupted it a little longer than I wanted to with a walk, but it is what it is. I should finish this one tomorrow or the next day.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3674

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976
Day 24... 2698 words. Total words to date..... 44,674
Day 25... 5214 words. Total words to date..... 49,888
Day 26... 3467 words. Total words to date..... 53,355
Day 27... 3674 words. Total words to date..... 57,029

Total fiction words for the month..... 68,603
Total fiction words for the year..... 138,509
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 373,021

February 27, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 a.m. again. Checked email.

After checking email, I tweaked some of my websites. After breakfast and when I was alone again I went

straight to the novel. Wrote a little over 1000 words in one session, then went back and slashed some other stuff that I decided didn't fit. So I got rid of words that were bugging me.

Then a walk beckoned. I turned around at the 2.5 mile mark, not wanting to go beyond about 5. So much for plans. I wandered off-path (not difficult to do, for me at least, in this part of the world) and ended up WAY off course. When I got back to my pickup I'd logged 6.9 miles and saw a LOT of country I didn't recognize from Eden. (grin)Oof.

Got back here, wrote this stuff. I don't have a lot left to do on the novel (one scene of 700 to 1500 words, I think) so I'm gonna wait and get back on it in the morning. Then I have to get a short story out for this Monday too. Only seven weeks (and seven short stories) left in this challenge. I started on April 15, 2014 and I'll post the last short story of the week on Monday, April 13. "The Odd Task" was short story number 53 since I started the challenge. If I don't break the streak of writing at least one per week (and if I don't write more than one per week between now and then), the one I post on April 13 will be number 60. Not bad for an old man.

I'm thinking of trying to keep the streak going until I've hit 100 stories. That would be 130 publications (100 short stories, ten 10-story collections, 20 5-story collections). Any thoughts?

Back in the morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1042

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976
Day 24... 2698 words. Total words to date..... 44,674
Day 25... 5214 words. Total words to date..... 49,888
Day 26... 3467 words. Total words to date..... 53,355
Day 27... 3674 words. Total words to date..... 57,029 (adjusted to 56,196)
Day 28... 1042 words. Total words to date..... 57,238

Total fiction words for the month..... 69,645

Total fiction words for the year..... 139,551
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 374,063

February 28, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 a.m. again. Checked email, then straight to the novel and finished it. The ending on this one was more difficult than usual, but with some adjustments it moved along well enough. Kicked out another 200+ words and then wrote what you see below.

I planned to write the story of the week today too, but I created the cover for this one (mostly) and then searched for and downloaded future cover pics from Canstock. (For $39 I get to download up to 10 pics per day for 7 days. It's a good deal. I get 70 pics for about 56 cents each.)

So no more writing today, which means I'll write the story of the week tomorrow.

Back in the morning

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1847

Writing of Confessions of a Professional Psychopath (Eric Stringer's first novel)
Day 1..... 4052 words. Total words to date..... 4052
Day 2..... 3095 words. Total words to date..... 7147
Day 3..... 3363 words. Total words to date..... 10,542
Day 4..... 981 words. Total words to date..... 11,523
Day 5..... 3362 words. Total words to date..... 14,885
Day 6..... 1402 words. Total words to date..... 16,287
Day 7..... 1322 words. Total words to date..... 17,609
Day 8..... 3143 words. Total words to date..... 20,752
Day 9..... 3357 words. Total words to date..... 24,260
Day 10... 1102 words. Total words to date..... 25,362
Day 11... 1704 words. Total words to date..... 27,066 (adjusted to 13,390)
Day 12... 1429 words. Total words to date..... 14,819
Day 13... 4068 words. Total words to date..... 18,887
Day 14... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 22,991
Day 15... 2867 words. Total words to date..... 25,858
Day 16... 1948 words. Total words to date..... 27,806
Day 17... 1467 words. Total words to date..... 29,273
Day 18... 1153 words. Total words to date..... 30,426
Day 19... 3152 words. Total words to date..... 33,578
Day 20... 1806 words. Total words to date..... 35,384
Day 21... 1651 words. Total words to date..... 36,035
Day 22... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 39,074
Day 23... 2902 words. Total words to date..... 41,976
Day 24... 2698 words. Total words to date..... 44,674
Day 25... 5214 words. Total words to date..... 49,888
Day 26... 3467 words. Total words to date..... 53,355
Day 27... 3674 words. Total words to date..... 57,029 (adjusted to 56,196)
Day 28... 1042 words. Total words to date..... 57,238
Day 29... 1847 words. Total words to date..... 59,085 *(done)*

Total fiction words for the month..... 71,492 Great month, especially for the doldrums of February.
Total fiction words for the year..... 141,398
Total fiction words since April 15, 2014..... 375,910 (This is the last figure I'm going to reflect from last April. I've done almost half this much in only the first two months of this year.)

March 1, 2015[edit]

Slept in a bit and rolled out just before 3. Checked email and journal stuff.

Well, I got comments back on the novel from my first reader and repaired the problems she caught. I thought about reading the whole thing again, but frankly, I couldn't handle it.

Then I finished designing the cover and the front of the CreateSpace cover, wrote the Promo document and published Confessions of a Professional Psychopath to Smashwords and Amazon. Of course, then I had to update my websites, which meant creating a new page for the new book, publishing both pictures (300 px and 180 px) to the sites, revising the menu, etc.

That led me to realized I needed to further streamline my operation. I moved all story, collection and novel/novella pages to HarveyStanbrough.com and deleted them from HEStanbrough.com. At the latter, I updated the menu with links that will take the reader to the appropriate page on HarveyStanbrough.com. Later I need to add all the book cover pix to HarveyStanbrough.com and change all the code references, and then I'll be clean for going into the future.

BUT FIRST I have to write the story of the week, which will go live tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. Right now 8:30 a.m. on Sunday), I haven't a clue what that story will be about, but I'm pretty sure it won't feature Charlie Task.

Back later.

Nope, didn't feature Charlie Task. (grin) It did feature a main character who wouldn't tell me who he was until very late in the story, though. This one was great fun.

Back in the morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3343

Writing of "Where No Man Has Gone Before" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 3344 words. Total words to date..... 3343 *Done*

Total fiction words for the month..... 3,343
Total fiction words for the year..... 144,741

March 2, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 1:30. Checked email and journal stuff, then got the cover designed for "Where No Man Has Gone Before." Got it posted to the site and then up on Smashwords and Amazon. That was done by about 3.

Then I decided to continue streamlining my sites. Over at HarveyStanbrough.com I uploaded all the covers in a new size (down from 180 wide to 150 wide) so I could get six across on the short story page. To do it right I re-coded the page, etc. Massive PITA, but now it's done so I can move forward one story at a time from here. (grin) I was gonna stop there, but while I was in the sort'a techie zone, I revised my Novels and Collections pages as well. I think they all look better with the smaller book covers.

So that was the first 6+ hours of my day. It's almost 8 now so I'm gonna just chill for a bit. A little later today I'll start either the next story of the week or the next novel or both. Also gonna try to get a walk in today if the weather cooperates.

Goals… in addition to my ongoing goal to write at least one new short story each week and 3000 new words of fiction per day, I'm also setting a new goal to write fiction every day this month. As I will discuss in just a moment, with my unusual hours, there's no reason I can't write every day.

Okay, I'm gonna talk about a subject that's proven touchy in the past. DWS has been talking a lot in his blog lately (like for several days) about how it's all right for life stuff to get in the way of your writing, that sometimes things just happen, etc. ad nauseam.

I don't buy it.

Now don't throw stuff at me. I mean yes, if you have a pretty much normal day along with everyone else around you, I can see how life might get in the way against your will.

But when you keep the hours I keep (or DWS keeps), life can get in the way only if you let it.

For example, he talked about taking one week each year to go to Vegas to play poker with his buddies. Okay, no problem, but that's a choice, not life getting in the way. Just sayin', let's keep it real here.

My long-term (one year) goal is to write 1,000,000 words of original published fiction this year (what DWS calls "Pulp Speed"). Right now I'm behind the curve. My average right now is 72,371 words per month. Over 12 months, that will leave me short by 131,548 words. We'll see. Back later.

Okay, didn't work out as well as I hoped it would, but I got some writing done. When the weather's miserably ugly like this outside, I can't walk, and I also can't avoid paying attention to it. Makes for an ugly day. It's all right. Everything resets tomorrow. (grin)

Back in the morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1945

Writing of "Agatha Demon Bitters" (short story, probably)
Day 1…… 1945 words. Total words to date…… 1945

Total fiction words for the month…… 5,288
Total fiction words for the year…… 146,690

March 3, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 1:30 again. Checked email and journal stuff, then moved on to the story from yesterday. Writing this one is wonderful fun.

No streamlining today. Piddling, a walk, writing.

That ugly R word was giving me fits today too, so I finally relented. I saved the story, then saved it in a B file and went back through the whole thing, REWRITING it. It was an incredible experience. The rewriting was literally agony, worrying and fretting over each word, where to start a new paragraph, etc. instead of just WRITING. I probably will never do it again. I did it this time for a comparison.

Ugh.

Fortunately, as I said, I saved the original file before I started all that nonsense. And yes, I opened it, went back to where I'd stopped writing, read the previous three sentences, and then started writing again. It

carried me through to almost the end. (grin) Unless this springs off into a novella or novel, I'll finish it fairly quickly tomorrow and start something else.

So if the R word starts nagging you too badly, maybe try it. Go back to it and see whether it drags you down into the muck. During that session, writing WAS drudgery, but that's because I wasn't allowing my creative mind to do what it does. I was restraining it with my critical, conscious mind. I have to tell you, I feel SO sorry for people who are serious about their work but are trapped in their fears. It's all crap.

Never again.

Goals… I've decided to just keep writing one new short story each week, period. And I'll continue with my current goal of 3000 new words of fiction per day and the new goal I set yesterday to write fiction every day this month. Again, with my unusual hours, there's no reason I can't write every day.
My long-term (one year) goal remains to write 1,000,000 words of original published fiction this year.

We'll see.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3116

Writing of "Agatha Demon Bitters" (story of the week?)
Day 1..... 1945 words. Total words to date..... 1945
Day 2..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 5061

Total fiction words for the month..... 8,404
Total fiction words for the year..... 149,806

March 4, 2015[edit]

Rolled out shortly after 3. Checked email and journal stuff, then moved on to the story from yesterday.

Really enjoyed writing this one. This is one of those that I think everybody will like across the board.

Wandered around CanStock for awhile to find just the right pic, and I found her, Miss Bitters, I mean. Cool. Got the cover done, got the story posted and scheduled to release on Sunday, and now I'm going to publish to Smashwords and Amazon. Then I'll put the cover and link on my big site at HarveyStanbrough.com and be done with it.

Probably no walking today. After I publish and take a break, I'll get back to writing… something. (grin) Turned out no writing beyond finishing the story from yesterday. Got wrapped up in proofing and hyphenating the POD version of Confessions, so that's finished. Tomorrow, back to the pen! (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 0267

Writing of "The Unfortunate Case of Agatha Bitters" (story of the week for March 9)
Day 1..... 1945 words. Total words to date..... 1945
Day 2..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 5061
Day 3..... 0267 words. Total words to date..... 5328 Done

Total fiction words for the month..... 8,671
Total fiction words for the year..... 150,073

March 5, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Kind'a back on schedule maybe.

I'm jonesing to write, but over four hours into my day I haven't written a word of fiction yet.

At a little over five hours, an idea occurred and I turned to the writing 'puter. I started writing but it was all developing the idea, kind of world-building. In fact, within the big, overall developing idea were smaller ideas that also were attractive for short stories and for longer works on their own.

I don't doubt for a second some of those will develop, but they aren't developing right now. And I don't really care. I'd rather write but this might be a griping and whining day instead of a writing day. (grin)

Gonna do a walk and see what happens after that.

Okay, got a little writing done. Decided to revisit some favorite characters and meet a few new ones in a prequel to Leaving Amarillo. Not sure how many there will be in the series when all is said and done, but this one needed to be written. It will be at least one novel.

It will begin with Wes and Mac joining the Texas Rangers in 1868.

Of course, historical westerns don't sell really well (except to people who like historical westerns) and blah blah blah. But the thing is, I really like these characters, and I really like the storyline that I think probably happened between Mac and Wes before their difficulty, and I really want to see what it was. So I'm gonna write it. (grin)

Not a lot of writing today, but given the muck I waded through in my griping and whining stage, I'll take it. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2308

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308

Total fiction words for the month..... 10,879
Total fiction words for the year..... 152,381

March 6, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2:30. Emails, a little other stuff.

After getting a pretty good start yesterday on the next novel, I took an unexpected day off from writing today. Really want to get the POD for Eric Stringer's first novel up and out, and I decided to use it to establish a style sheet for POD versions of my future novels. So I'm going through it, experimenting with font faces and sizes, leading, tracking, etc. It's laborious, but once it's finished and I have the style sheet put together, I hope I won't have to worry about it again.

So zero writing to report today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 10,879
Total fiction words for the year..... 152,381

March 7, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3. Checked email and a few other things, then dived headlong into finishing what I started yesterday on the business end of writing. Ugh.

The upshot is, Eric Stringer's first novel is submitted for POD, and I also uploaded new versions for both Smashwords and Amazon. So all finished on that now. I have to tell you, it was good to let that one go.

I also got a style sheet started as well as a new template for my novels that aren't divided into chapters. So I shouldn't have to do that again.

I anticipate a VERY good day of writing tomorrow, so I don't feel too bad about the small number today. Back tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1330

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638

Total fiction words for the month..... 12,209
Total fiction words for the year..... 153,711

March 8, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Checked email and found a gem in Dr. Mardy's Quotes of the Week. I think I've recommended it before.

Writer Erle Stanley Gardner, dubbed The Fiction Factory in his obit by the NY Times, died on March 11, 1970. He published his first story when he was 34 years old. At one point during his amazing career (140 novels), he wrote (via dictation) as much as 10,000 words in a day.

My own daily goal is only 3,000 words of fiction per day, and yet, not a good day again today. Well, there's always tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1003

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641

Total fiction words for the month..... 13,212
Total fiction words for the year..... 154,714

March 9, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 3. Checked email and other things. Annnnd we're rolling again.

Back on track with writing today. Just not sure what.

I've had an interesting, weird but relaxing morning so far. I was feeling a little overwhelmed, I think, with writing the prequel to Leaving Amarillo. Not sure why (some silly, unreasoning fear), but I worked through it. At first, I started thinking maybe I should abandon it or postpone it and add more to Wes' story in Mexico… so a sequel. In the story in my mind, many loose ends have cropped up since I published South to Mexico back in late December.

So I went back and read the last ten pages or so of South to Mexico. I decided I definitely will continue that story, but as I was reading and thinking about that, young Wes and Mac came clearly to mind again. It seems Wes' story is destined to be told in full, from the prequel through to whatever happens after South to Mexico. So I'm going to be busy for awhile (yay).

It feels good, actually, to have a basic idea of what I want to do. It also feels good knowing I can interrupt writing those novels to continue my streak of writing a short story per week without any major glitches. In fact, probably a few short stories will come from related stories that don't quite fit in the novels. We'll see. Wes and his story might well take over my life. And to think, back when I started writing my own stuff full time, I had no intention of writing a western. Go figure. Or as Wes would say, "Go figger."

Back later with some numbers.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4171

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1…… 4171 words. Total words to date…… 4171

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1…… 2308 words. Total words to date…… 2308
Day 2…… 1330 words. Total words to date…… 3638
Day 3…… 1003 words. Total words to date…… 4641
Day 4…… XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXX

Total fiction words for the month…… 17,383
Total fiction words for the year…… 158,885

March 10, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 3. Checked email and other things.

Not quite as good a day writing today as I'd like but my own stupid fault. Went for what should have been a 2-3 hour walk in the desert, got myself lost and wound up with 7.5 miles almost 4 hours later. (grin) Ah well, it's all good.

Anyway, I won't post on Friday, 3/13. El Dan Baldwino the Magnificent and I are going on a two-day adventure over in the Gila Wilderness across the line in New Mexico. I will take my writing 'puter and I will write while we're there, but that 'puter doesn't do Internet, so no post for Friday. I'll post Friday and Saturday's numbers on Saturday.

I plan to write some on the sequel and/or the prequel tomorrow, but I also hope to get the story of the week written and ready to post before I leave. (grin) That one story per week challenge really has kept me disciplined and on my toes. I recommend it if you're a person who likes to challenge yourself.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3452

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 20,835
Total fiction words for the year..... 162,337

March 11, 2015[edit]

Slept in big time. Didn't get up until 4 a.m. That longer than expected walk yesterday took a toll I guess. Checked email and other things. Glad to see blog posts from Candy and Alison.

A good day writing today, though I did nothing for a short story for this week. It'll happen tomorrow or whenever. As long as it's up by Monday, no harm, no foul.

Had a blast today writing on the prequel. I hoped to get some done on the sequel too, but didn't get much done to speak of so I'll leave it as-is.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3125

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767

Total fiction words for the month..... 23,960
Total fiction words for the year..... 165,462

March 12, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3 a.m. Checked email.

I look forward to a good day of writing today, in segments. Still training myself to write, take a break,

write, take a break, etc.

There's an excellent post on the importance of Routine and Scheduling over at Kris Rusch's website. Seriously, I can't recommend it strongly enough. Also, you can get Kris' entire Freelancer's Survival Guide here. Finally, I recommend her series on Discoverability. Again, I recommend it. In fact, I hope you'll make a habit of going by and reading various parts of her entire site. Good stuff.

Maybe a little too much reading/learning this morning. Threw off my own schedule. (grin) Now to the writing.

Well, in a burst of three good sessions with only a short break every hour or so I wrote the story of the week for this week. So that's done. I put it up on the site and on Smashwords and Amazon. It will post on the site (free) on Sunday and then go out via MailChimp on Monday. The streak LIVES. (grin) Only three weeks to go in order to have written at least one short story per week every week for a year.

Had a great walk today as well. Felt relaxed and energized afterward. Go figure. (grin)

Now I'm gonna see whether I can add anything worth reporting to the prequel or the sequel of The Wes Crowley Trilogy. This is so much freakin' FUN! (grin) Back in a bit.

Okay, good writing day today. I intend to carve out some writing time tomorrow and Saturday as well, so we'll see what happens. (grin) I won't post again until Saturday evening. You guys WRITE! Here's to every one of you.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3915 (short story and prequel)

Writing of "Fascination" (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 3212 words. Total words to date..... 3212 done

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (nothing today)

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470

Total fiction words for the month..... 27,875
Total fiction words for the year..... 169,377

March 14, 2015[edit]

Okay, yesterday, Friday, I rolled out just before 3 a.m. Checked email. Spent most of the early time prepping for my trip with Dan into what's called the Lower Gila Box, or the Lower Gila River Wilderness Area. That's north/northwest of Lordsburg. Beautiful out there. If you've never been, I recommend it.

I wasn't sure what I'd do for writing, but as it turned out I wrote a little over 1800 words in two sessions. That was after a hike of almost 6 miles, much of it uphill at about a 60 degree angle. Some was on a goat

trail that was about 8″ wide. Great fun, but I wouldn't wanna do it every day.

You know I'm writing both a sequel and a prequel to The Wes Crowley Series. I was just thinking, it's wonderful to have a choice of writing the same main character but with about 20 years' difference in his age, experience and so on. Very strange, but very good. There are a few built-in restrictions in writing the sequel, but roughly half a ton of latitude in writing the prequel(s). So again, a great deal of fun.

However, as I'm writing this (Saturday, 3/14) I've been back a couple hours, chilled a bit and am toast. So I'm taking a formal day off writing today. Back at it tomorrow morning, probably early. I hope all of you are enjoying this writing journey as much as I am.

Friday 3/13 Writing
Fiction words: 1810

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 27,875
Total fiction words for the year..... 169,377

March 15, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 1:30. Checked email. Spent some time prepping pics from the trip and then posted a few of them on Facebook. Got a lot of good shots, maybe ten really great shots. I'll offer some of those for sale as prints, maybe, on my website later.

Getting back into writing, kind'a slow going because I'm still tired so mostly I took a day off today. Still very much enjoying "older" Wes in the sequel. Watched NYPD Blue from noon to five (GREAT series to learn how to write Scene). Now there's an old Bond movie coming on, so I think I'm gonna turn off my mind and just zone out for awhile. Another night of sleep, I should be back full force.

Kind'a wondering where everyone else is, but I guess you're all doing what you need to do. I hope for you that you're writing and loving it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2977

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433

Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 11510

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 29,952 (for halfway through the month -1 day, I'll take it)
Total fiction words for the year..... 171,454

March 16, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 3:30. Checked email.

In email today I received one congratulating me on writing a story every week. He wanted to know how I got all of them edited. He also said writing a story per week "sort of takes a huge amount of time." Wow. Never ceases to amaze me how surprised people are—especially other writers—to find out that writers actually, you know, WRITE. Anyway, I wrote a whole big post (over 1200 words) that will go live tomorrow over on the big blog. (grin)

Yesterday I actually wrote 2077, not 2977. I was so tired I didn't realize my mistake until I'd posted the thing, even after having to do the addition, etc. I do remember saying it wasn't a good writing day. I've adjusted yesterday's figures to convey that fact. (It matters because I'm keeping this separately as a record for myself.)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2387

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 11510
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 32,339
Total fiction words for the year..... 173,841

March 17, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:40. Getting closer to being back on schedule.

Put about 1500 words on the screen, then a short walk to give me a break from the 'puter and keep my

hand in. A little under 2 miles I think.

Okay, pretty good day of writing today, with some on the sequel and some on the prequel. Score! (grin)

Still not taking a break often enough to keep my eyes from going fuzzy, so I have to continue working on that. Eventually I'd like to get up to writing 6,000 words per day or more. That would be ideal.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4429

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529

Total fiction words for the month..... 36,768
Total fiction words for the year..... 178,270

March 18, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Seem to be back on schedule and better than before.

Pretty good day of writing again today, though mostly on the prequel. I also culled a short story from the prequel for an advance look at young Wes and Mac. It will be the short story of the week for next Monday.

Did a better job of taking a break often enough today to keep my eyes in halfway good shape too. After I finished writing for the day (well, after I reached my daily goal) I went ahead and designed a cover for the short story and published it to Amazon and Smashwords. Still working on expanding my daily goal too. We'll see.

Just having a great deal of fun and hope all of you are as well.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3466

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995

Total fiction words for the month..... 40,234
Total fiction words for the year..... 181,736

March 19, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2 this morning. My little Siamese was touching my cheek with one paw. When I opened one eye, she was about 2 inches from my face. She whispered "Dad?" I finally got up a few minutes later. (grin)

Had a note via Facebook from a lady in New Mexico to ask when the next books in the series would be out. She'd read Leaving Amarillo. It was neat to tell her books two and three were already for sale, and that I was working on the sequel (so book 4) and the first prequel at the moment.

Forgot to mention yesterday, the cover pic for "The Road to Amarillo" (the short story of the week) was one of the pics I got last weekend over near Lordsburg.

Good enough day of writing again today, all on the prequel.

Still, just having a great deal of fun and hope all of you are as well. For that matter, I hope all of you are well, period.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3052

Writing of **The Marshal of Agua Perlado** (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day X..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of Wes Crowley prequel
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047

Total fiction words for the month..... 43,286
Total fiction words for the year..... 184,788

March 20, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2 this morning.

Pretty good day of writing again today, all on the prequel, which I've tentatively decided to call The Rise of a Warrior. For an excerpt see the short story of the week that will post on HEStanbrough.com on Sunday and go live on MailChimp on Monday.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3776

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day X..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823

Total fiction words for the month..... 47,062
Total fiction words for the year..... 188,564

March 21, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2 this morning.

For a refresher, I really strongly recommend you go to the old DWS Post on Heinlein's Rules. Read the post and at least skim over all of the replies. Great stuff there.

I also recommend listening to the podcast with DWS HERE.

There's another great podcast with Kristine Kathryn Rusch HERE.

Because the prequel is currently coming along faster than the sequel, I moved it to the top. I feel like I should finish the sequel first, though, especially since there probably will be one or two more prequels. Thoughts? If you were a reader of this story, wouldn't you rather see the sequel(s) to South to Mexico before seeing the prequels or would it matter to you?

Pretty good day of writing again today, all on The Rise of a Warrior. Kind of hope I can get back to doing more on The Marshal of Agua Perlado soon, but I don't want to mess up what I'm doing on the prequel either. Good problem to have, I guess. (grin)

Well, I had a little over 2000 words but had to break to go to Sierra Vista to buy a lawnmower. Bought a little cheaper brand that I wanted, got back here, got it together, got all the liquids in it, and it wouldn't work. So there went about five hours I'll never get back. I was so frustrated and angry that I didn't think I'd get anymore writing done today. But lo and behold, I sat down, put my fingers on the keyboard, and another 1700 words came out. Yep, just like that in about an hour and 40 minutes. Woohoo!

The lawnmower? I think the engine is locked up. I'll try it again in the morning (well, normal morning, after sun up), and if it doesn't work we'll take it back to Lowes in Sierra Vista in the morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3730

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day X..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 50,792
Total fiction words for the year..... 192,294

March 22, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 2 this morning.

Ugh. Lawnmower troubles. Brand new, engine's locked up. Loaded it up, drove to Sierra Vista, swapped it back to Lowes for a better one plus sixty bucks. Incredible the difference in quality for only sixty more dollars.

I was surprised I received only one suggestion re my prequel/sequel question. If anyone else wants to put in your two cents, I'm listening. For the question, see yesterday's post.

Knocked out a little over a thousand words on The Rise of a Warrior. Too distracted today, but a day off probably wouldn't kill me either. Maybe. We'll see whether I get anything else done today re writing.

Nope, not much more done today. Back at it in the morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1534

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day X..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 52,326
Total fiction words for the year..... 193,828

March 23, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 5 this morning. Up babysitting my ulcer last night. Ugh.

Because of my late night and late rising, I missed a few hours of prime writing time early. Not a word written before I left for my walk at about 10. Really hard to get things done when I'm off my schedule.

No matter when I get up, the first hour of the day is dedicated to waking up, reading email, blog posts etc. Usually I can write for two to three hours between 2 or 3 and 6. From 6 to 9:30 is dead time for me as the house is a LOT noisier than is conducive to writing. So I dedicate that time span to waiting, biting my nails, and wishing I were a hermit.

By the way, thanks to those of you who responded to my sequel/prequel question. When I get back to it I'm going to just write what wants to be written. If the prequel is finished first, I'll publish it and begin writing the second prequel, then the third if there is one. I might also write any spinoffs. The only thing I can't do is publish the prequel then the sequel then another prequel, etc. So that's settled for now.

Okay, almost 2 and I decided to call this a day off of writing. Hope to be back to my version of normal tomorrow.

So zero new words for today. This is annoying, but it is what it is.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641

Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day X..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 52,326
Total fiction words for the year..... 193,828

March 24, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Still a bit under the weather but a bit better too. No walking today.

Fairly good day of writing today, and all of it on The Marshal of Agua Perlado (the sequel). Go figure. Good to know I can feel like I'm trudging through knee-deep mud and still knock out my daily goal. I'm sayin', what I can do, you can do.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3269

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536

Total fiction words for the month..... 55,595
Total fiction words for the year..... 197,097

March 25, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 2 this morning. Still a bit under the weather but a bit better too. Probably no walking again today.

Wrote about a thousand words on The Marshal of Agua Perlado, then hopped over to my big blog and wrote a new post there. I don't count blog words anymore because my fiction is all I really care about. Anyway, back to writing.

Took a break, walked a bit, probably should have stayed in. Anyway, didn't knock out as much as I'd hoped, but I'm calling it a day. Everything should be better tomorrow. Focus, focus, focus.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1910

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446

Total fiction words for the month..... 57,505
Total fiction words for the year..... 199,007

March 26, 2015[edit]

Can't believe there's less than a week left in this month. Ugh.

Okay, rolled out a little after 2 this morning. Still under the weather, mostly allergies, but hope to have some new meds this afternoon that will lift me over it.

Okay, writing stuff... early during the writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (sequel) I had copied some stuff from South to Mexico and pasted it past the end of my new writing in The Marshal text. Sometime

soon after that, I started working on The Rise of a Warrior (prequel) and promptly forgot about the reference text in The Marshal.

Today I found it, and decided I'd best get it out of there and out of my word count for The Marshal of Agua Perlado. So I wrote a little today—when I was writing really was the only time I felt good—but I also slashed 2655 words that didn't belong in the new text because they were part of the old. So that's what the "adjusted" number below is all about. Hope to get myself back on track tomorrow.

Went back to the 'puter and ended up writing just a little over 1000 words on each book. Pathetic, but for now, I'm calling it a day. Hoping today will be a LOT better. Not a lot of time to get my March numbers up.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2017

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)

Total fiction words for the month..... 59,525
Total fiction words for the year..... 201,024

March 27, 2015[edit]

Wow, crashed and burned. Rolled out late at almost 4 this morning.

Got in a walk of 3.7 miles, mostly to test the allergy meds. (How do you know whether it'll push back unless you push it, right?) Worked out all right. That 3.7 miles isn't really a good representation of the workout. About a mile of it was on a stop-and-breathe uphill. Ugh.

Okay, writing stuff... After I wrote awhile on The Rise of a Warrior, I started the new story of the week. I was unable to finish it today, so I'm hoping I'll be able to finish it in the morning before I drive into Tucson to teach my Creating Characters intensive. Woohoo! Deadlines and pressure. Gotta love it. This

one isn't derived from the series or western at all. Actually, it's narrated by a hitman from Brooklyn. Great fun. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3812

Writing of "Heart to Heart" (upcoming short story of the week)
Day 1.....1547 words. Total words to date..... 1547

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)

Total fiction words for the month..... 63,337
Total fiction words for the year..... 204,836

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 439,247

(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

March 28, 2015[edit]

Okay, back on schedule, sort of, at least for this morning. Rolled out right at 2 a.m.

No walking today, but plenty of mental exercise as I'll be "on" all day teaching what will probably be my final writing intensive on Writing the Character Driven Story. If your writing lacks depth, this is the one to take. If anyone reading this would like to jump in, you're welcome. It's at my old Tucson venue at 9 a.m. this morning. That's in the clubhouse at the Mountain Vista mobile home park in south Tucson. You can find it on Google maps.

Great post over at DWS Website today. Scroll down and read the Topic of the Night. Posting this early today because I know I won't write after I get back from Tucson. I'll be toast, and toast doesn't know how

to type. (grin)

Okay, writing stuff… Wrote some more on the short story, but then Wes and Mac poked their heads into my mind and started whispering and I had to hop over to The Rise of a Warrior. So no more writing today as I have to get ready for the intensive. Great fun. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2783

Writing of "Heart to Heart" (short story of the week)
Day 1……1547 words. Total words to date…… 1547
Day 2……1114 words. Total words to date…… 2661

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1…… 2308 words. Total words to date…… 2308
Day 2…… 1330 words. Total words to date…… 3638
Day 3…… 1003 words. Total words to date…… 4641
Day 4…… 3126 words. Total words to date…… 7767
Day 5…… 0703 words. Total words to date…… 8470
Day 6…… 2059 words. Total words to date…… 10529
Day 7…… 3466 words. Total words to date…… 13995
Day 8…… 3052 words. Total words to date…… 17047
Day 9…… 3776 words. Total words to date…… 20823
Day 10…. 3730 words. Total words to date…… 24553
Day 11…. 1534 words. Total words to date…… 26087
Day 12…. 1014 words. Total words to date…… 27101
Day 13…. 2265 words. Total words to date…… 29366
Day 14…. 1669 words. Total words to date…… 31035

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1…… 4171 words. Total words to date…… 4171
Day 2…… 3452 words. Total words to date…… 7623
Day 3…… 1810 words. Total words to date…… 9433
Day 4…… 2977 words. Total words to date…… 12410
Day 5…… 2387 words. Total words to date…… 13897
Day 6…… 2370 words. Total words to date…… 16267
Day 7…… 3269 words. Total words to date…… 19536
Day 8…… 1910 words. Total words to date…… 21446
Day 9…… 1003 words. Total words to date…… 19518 (adjusted)

Total fiction words for the month…… 66,120
Total fiction words for the year…… 207,619

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014…… 442,030
(*I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.*)

March 29, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 1 this morning. Children coming to visit so wanted to get my writing in. Finished the story of the week first so I could get it posted. Not sure I've ever worked on a short story for three days in a row, but it's a good one so I guess it's all right.

Gonna go mow the yard now to wake up and get some exercise. Back to writing, I hope, a bit later.

Okay, anyone who wants to see it before tomorrow, my latest short story, “Heart to Heart” by Eric Stringer, is up on the site now at HEStanbrough.com. I didn’t sit down and talk with Wes and Mac after I mowed. Screwed off instead. Calling it a day today, and will run and play with the boys early tomorrow morning. (grin)

Today’s Writing
Fiction words: 0946

Writing of “Heart to Heart” (short story of the week)
Day 1……1547 words. Total words to date…… 1547
Day 2……1114 words. Total words to date…… 2661
Day 3……0946 words. Total words to date…… 3607 done

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1…… 2308 words. Total words to date…… 2308
Day 2…… 1330 words. Total words to date…… 3638
Day 3…… 1003 words. Total words to date…… 4641
Day 4…… 3126 words. Total words to date…… 7767
Day 5…… 0703 words. Total words to date…… 8470
Day 6…… 2059 words. Total words to date…… 10529
Day 7…… 3466 words. Total words to date…… 13995
Day 8…… 3052 words. Total words to date…… 17047
Day 9…… 3776 words. Total words to date…… 20823
Day 10…. 3730 words. Total words to date…… 24553
Day 11…. 1534 words. Total words to date…… 26087
Day 12…. 1014 words. Total words to date…… 27101
Day 13…. 2265 words. Total words to date…… 29366
Day 14…. 1669 words. Total words to date…… 31035
Day 15…. XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1…… 4171 words. Total words to date…… 4171
Day 2…… 3452 words. Total words to date…… 7623
Day 3…… 1810 words. Total words to date…… 9433
Day 4…… 2977 words. Total words to date…… 12410
Day 5…… 2387 words. Total words to date…… 13897
Day 6…… 2370 words. Total words to date…… 16267
Day 7…… 3269 words. Total words to date…… 19536
Day 8…… 1910 words. Total words to date…… 21446
Day 9…… 1003 words. Total words to date…… 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10…. XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month…… 67,066
Total fiction words for the year…… 208,565

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014…… 442,976
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

March 31, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning.

I was looking forward to getting back to the story(ies) today. I was also looking forward to ending March with at least 70,000 words, but that is not to be. Still, I finished with over 67,000 and I’ll take it. (grin)

I wrote a little bit at various times through the day, but it was kind of writing around the writing. Not enough writing to even count it. I'll just include it in tomorrow's totals. Mostly I piddled, primarily recovering from the whirlwind visit of my children and grandchildren. Guess things like that affect me physically more strongly than they did a few (7) years ago. Lot of difference between 55 years old and 62 years old, at least in this body. (grin)

So I took a very short walk, switched the unit on top of the house from heat to swamp cooler, and washed my feelthy peekup trock.

Oh, also had a side trip to Walmart. Took a different med this morning to combat my allergies (testing three different meds) and I had a pretty strong allergic reaction to the new antihistamine. Go figure. I'm allergic to my allergy med. (grin) The reaction lasted for a couple hours, with closed, itchy, watery eyes, fatigue and dizziness. When it finally went away, I went to Walmart for the good meds I was taking earlier this week.

So today ended up being another day off of writing, and I'm fine with that. Some days are for recovery. Back tomorrow with a vengeance.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 67,066
Total fiction words for the year..... 208,565

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 442,976
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 1, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3 this morning. Think I'm finally caught up on sleep.

Well, Mark Coker, the owner of Smashwords, posted a shocking blog post this morning (it's April Fool's Day) all about a new Amazon service that eliminates the need for authors. The fictional fiction service is called Kindle Author. And yes, he got me. I felt like the world was ending just after I'd found it. Ha ha, good one, jerk. I mean, Mark. Sorry. There's a place for practical jokes. For my money, a professional blog is not that place.

Back on track, sort of. I've been away from these books so long they weren't flowing well. Below you'll see that I wrote over 1600 new words for the prequel, but also over another 2700 new words that might or might not make it into the prequel or sequel. They're related, but I'm not sure how just yet. But I wrote 'em and they're fiction so I'm countin' em.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4405 (2711 related to Wes' story)

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 4,405
Total fiction words for the year..... 212,970

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 447,381
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 2, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning.

Just in case anyone missed my post yesterday and is reading it today, Mark Coker, the owner of Smashwords, posted a shocking blog post (on April Fool's Day) all about a new Amazon service that eliminates the need for authors. Just in case you read the Smashwords blog but didn't read to the end, it's all BS. Not one word is true, so don't sweat it.

Not a great day writing today, but a great day coming tomorrow. I can feel it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1468

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767

Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 5,873
Total fiction words for the year..... 214,438

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 448,849
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 3, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 1:30 this morning.

Everybody who's reading this should also go read Kristine Kathryn Rusch's blog post about the business of writing now that the ebook gold rush is effectively over. It's important information that you need to know.

I'm glad to know a couple of you have decided to post here again. For those of you who choose not to, that's fine too. Before it's all said and done, I might drop off here myself, or post less often.

Not a great day writing today. Some moron with a motorcycle started his/her bike just down the way then let it IDLE for about a half-hour (I am not exaggerating) before FINALLY doing the neighborhood a favor and driving away, I hope directly into the path of a transmogrified swamp donkey driving a pulp wood truck with a sign on the front that says Stamp Out Insensitive Clods. But probably he/she didn't. I did hear sirens a bit later, but I dared not get my hopes up.

Determined to stay in all day and write (self-exile) but about ten-ish I was going stir crazy so then I went for a walk. Of course, complications arose from there that effectively took up the rest of the day. I felt like a character in a poorly written novel being "penned" by some idiot would-be writer who keeps changing the plotline as he reclines on a cloud in Heaven and directs my every freakin' activity from on high. And let me tell you, I really WISH he would come down here in the trenches with me. Even for just five minutes. Grrrrrrrrrrr.....

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1710

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 7,583
Total fiction words for the year..... 216,148

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 451,559
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 4, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3 this morning. Still tired I think. I thought it might be a day off of writing the novel(s). I had planned to do some reading that I need to get done and I have a class to put together and a few other things, so I thought I might devote the day to all that stuff and put it behind me. But it didn't turn out that way. (Yay!)

Of course, I still have to write the short story for this week too. This "at least one story per week" streak has been going for 51 weeks now. When I post the story this time, it will have been 52 weeks and I will have written and posted a new short story every week for a year. (grin)

The only difference is that when I began I was posting the stories on Thursday and now I'm posting them on Monday. To be sure I wasn't skipping anything, when I switched over I posted one on Thursday and then another one on Monday. So it was a short week, not a long one.

Well, as it turned out, it was most decidedly NOT a day off of writing on the novel. I got very little done on the reading I'd planned. I did a little more on the class, but it doesn't happen until May, and I got nothing done today on the short story of the week. Guess I know what I'll be doing tomorrow. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3851

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
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Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
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Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 11,434
Total fiction words for the year..... 219,999

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 455,410
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 5, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 a.m.

I had a minor epiphany this morning. After a year of following Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark, I realized the greatest gift that process has given me is the ability to wake up on Sunday morning, have the realization wash over me that I have a story due on Monday morning, and feel not one ounce of trepidation.

Instead, a sense of calm settles over me. I have no idea what I will write, how long it will be or what genre it will be. But I know that sometime during the day, a character will come to me. He will point to his problem and say something like, "Would'ya just look at this? Now what am I gonna do?" And he'll trudge off into his setting and, being the nice guy I am, I'll follow him and watch and listen carefully as he solves his problem. I'll record the result, and at the end of the day I will have written a new short story. Incredible. I am without a doubt the luckiest man on Earth, Lou Gehrig notwithstanding.

Okay, finished the short story for this week. As of today when I posted "A False Sense of Finality," my challenge to myself to write at least one story per week for a year has ended. However, I'll keep the streak going as long as I can. I just don't feel quite as much pressure over it now since I reached the official goal of writing one new story per week. In actuality, during that 52 weeks, I've written 59 new short stories. Not too shabby for an old guy learning new tricks. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3418

Writing of "A False Sense of Finality" (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 2237 words. Total words to date..... 2237 done

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 14,852
Total fiction words for the year..... 223,417

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 458,828
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 6, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3 a.m.

My children were supposed to stop by last night on their way home to NM from California, but they didn't make it. They plan now to stop by here today. So I waited up too late last night but still managed enough sleep, I think.

Even if most of you guys are never gonna participate, even if critical mind has pulled you back into the dungeons of writing hell, I hope you'll continue to read these posts if for no other reason than to see the little hints I post here when I can. Here's a really great one:

DWS has a great blog post today for two reasons: One, he writes about **Starting a New Novel** and two, he announces that he's writing a nonfiction book about Writing Into the Dark.

You all know I learned WITD from Dean inadvertently a little over a year ago. I say "inadvertently" because at the time it was only something he mentioned in his Heinlein's Rules online lecture (cost, $75). Since then (a couple of months ago) he began offering WITD as a video lecture for $50 and now he's putting it in a book.

Let me put it this way: I STRONGLY RECOMMEND IT.

Even if you already "get" WITD from what I taught you, if you hear the information differently it might help in a different way. Best of all, before he publishes the book, he says he's going to post the parts of that book as he writes it to his blog. So there you go. You can get it directly from the master free by just paying attention to his blog.

One quote from the DWS post above to illustrate why I think you should all go read it: "Starting a novel for me is always fun. The key is to not care, and I do mean that exactly as it sounds. If I allowed myself to care in the slightest, made writing the novel some major thing that I had to pick carefully on, I would freeze down and never write a word."

I couldn't agree more. I'm having an absolute ball writing, and the first several days are the most fun. I have a sneaking suspicion that "caring" thing hits all of us. The instant you allow the critical mind to question whether what you're writing is valid or good or blah blah blah, you're lost. Shut it up and get back on Heinlein's Rules and WITD. I wish that for all of you.

For me it's back to writing The Rise of a Warrior today, the first prequel to the Wes Crowley series. Today will be Day 20 writing this novel. I'm getting tired of it. I hope to finish it sometime in the next two or three days and get onto something else, even if the something else is Wes thirty years later in Mexico in The Marshal of Agua Perlado. (grin) And who knows? I might start another one that's not set in Wes' world too. But I have to finish this one first.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2574

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767

Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
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Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 17,426
Total fiction words for the year..... 225,991

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 461,402
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 7, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3 a.m.

Posting this way early today. Definitely a day off of writing. Took a new allergy med and five hours later it's still knocking me for a loop, plus it's done nothing nada el zippo to relieve my allergies. That's okay. Making a list of what not to buy in the future. Ugh. Annoying to be knocked off task this close to finishing one.
Of course, I can do all the technical stuff in my sleep, so I did put together and publish an Eric Stringer collection of five stories, Stern Stuff, today.

More good stuff at DWS if you'd care to go look. Also he announced he'll begin posting the chapters for the WITD book tomorrow (Wednesday, April 8).

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 14,852
Total fiction words for the year..... 223,417

Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 458,828
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 8, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 2 a.m.

Did nothing yesterday other than lying around watching TV. Probably more TV than I've watched in a year, mostly documentaries on mobsters and the like. Research, I call it.

Thanks to Michaele for emailing me with her knowledge on allergens, allergy meds, etc. I appreciate it. That's all finally settled.

If you haven't already, remember to visit http://DeanWesleySmith.com for chapters on his forthcoming WITD book. The intro is up today.

Yesterday's day off seems to have helped with The Rise of a Warrior. The story was feeling convoluted lately, and my critical mind kept bugging me (What about Wes? What about Mac?) That was leading me to feel pressure to write something extra about Wes and Mac, and that was bogging me down. Fortunately, I recognized it for what it was. I did a little of the extra writing it wanted me to do, but then I just stopped, sat back and looked at it and waited for it to tell me what was wrong.

Then it hit me.

As my subconscious tried to tell me back when it gave me the title, this first prequel isn't about Wes and Mac. It's about the birth of Four Crows as a Comanche war chief and the effect of that on the Texas Rangers in general. So I started my writing day this morning by reading over a bit of Rise and cutting some small bits of it. That and whatever new writing I've done today are included in the adjusted total below. Now too I'm certain I'll finish this one in the next few days.

I also know now there will be another prequel. Rise will be book 1, the next prequel will be book 2, then Leaving Amarillo, Longing for Mexico and South to Mexico (books 3, 4 and 5), and then The Marshal of Agua Perlado and probably one more sequel after that (books 6 and 7). I enjoy having a general idea of what each unwritten book is although I also enjoy not knowing where each book is going or how the characters are going to get there. It's a great life. (grin)

Okay, got most of the adjustments made today, and I ended up cutting so little that I'm not adjusting the total.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2596

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087

Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 17,448
Total fiction words for the year..... 226,013
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 461,424
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 9, 2015[edit]

Hello All....

Rolled out at 3 this morning and while heating water for coffee I checked my email. Threw my whole morning out of whack.

My web hosting company deactivated my web hosting account. This affected not only my personal websites, but all of the websites I've created for others over the past few years.

Over the next couple of hours I was able to get the account reactivated, obviously, but I probably will spend the balance of this day cleaning up the mess instead of writing.

The event was a frightening one that forced me to reevaluate my priorities.

Although one particular subdomain account was the major problem (too many spam comments), this particular Journal website and a few other unnecessary smaller ones were also part of the problem.

I started this site primarily as a way for us to keep each other motivated. We would do that, I thought, by 1) advertising our writing goals, 2) reporting our progress to our like-minded friends, and 3) sharing our discoveries along the way.

It hasn't worked out that way.

Only a couple of us post here with any regularity, and the two most active WITD practitioners in our group other than myself don't post here at all.

So I've decided to close down this site. I've already disabled comments here, so if you want to comment, please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

If you need something to help you remain accountable, I encourage you to pair off with a writing friend and exchange goals and reports on progress as I tried to do here. I personally find that process invaluable, and I might be reaching out to a few of you soon with challenges.

I also encourage you to keep your own records, for yourself, of words written per day, week, month and year, goals met and missed, etc. Dawn can show you quickly how to set up Excel spreadsheets to keep such data if you want to do it that way.

If there's anything I can help you with, as always, please feel free to contact me via email and let me know. If it's something I feel I can provide, I will do so.

I encourage you to follow DWS Blog and Kris Rusch's Blog as well as my own blog. Unfortunately, I don't really recommend any others.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111
Day 22.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the month..... 17,448
Total fiction words for the year..... 226,013
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 461,424
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 10, 2015[edit]

Rolled out around 3:30. Yesterday really took a toll.

This morning I did some finagling and reestablished this blog. So there's that. I hope everybody gets as much out of it as I did, whether or not you ever post. If you take something from it, that's good. If you add something, that's fine. Either way, it is what it is.

I hoped I would jump right back into my writing after a day and a half wrestling with web-related things, but that wasn't to be, at least not smoothly. As I started this morning I realized there's a major glitch in the timeline in the prequel. To correct it I have to move some major events from one place in the book to another. I think once I get that finished, it will be a sprint to the end.

You know, this whole situation with the Journal going away, coming back (all me, I know) reminds me of the power of streaks. I talked about that awhile back here, actually after DWS reminded me of it.

The power of streaks is what kept me posting a new short story every week for a solid year. The power of streaks is what drives me to the keyboard (almost) every day. And the power of streaks is what caused me to agonize over what I could do to revive this Journal. I've missed posting on it only One Time since I started it back on October 19, 2014, and that was because I was in the hinterlands of the Lower Gila Box wilderness. (Frankly, I don't do phones except to, you know, make a phone call or pads except to sit on.)

So the power of the streak is what got this thing going again. I hope all of you, regardless of your current stage and state of writing, set up and maintain a streak very soon. You won't believe the power of the thing until you experience it.

By the way, if you're going to DWS each day to read his take on Writing Into the Dark, you should also scroll down a bit and you'll see his "normal" post below that. I forgot to mention that before.

Okay, with all the moving and creating or recreating connections in the book today, I wound up with only a little over a thousand new words, but as I hoped I might be, I'm on the sprint to the end now. I'll take it. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1139

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
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Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111
Day 22.... 1139 words. Total words to date..... 47250

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 18,587
Total fiction words for the year..... 227,152
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 462,563
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 11, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3. No electricity so no email until about 5 a.m.

Again, I was going to jump straight into the prequel. But I wrote about 50 words or so and then remembered I hadn't written the story of the week yet, so I opened a new document.

An opening paragraph popped into my head: "Every now and then you come across something that makes your mouth water. When you do, it's almost impossible to resist." Along with that was only the sense that I wanted it to be something eerie. And I was off and writing. The resulting short story, "Mouth Watering," is online now free at HEStanbrough.com.

Took a couple hours to walk. Now I'm back for a quick bite, then to create a cover and publish "Mouth Watering" to Smashwords, Amazon and HEStanbrough.com and then back to The Rise of a Warrior.

Didn't get as much done on The Rise of a Warrior as I'd hoped, but back at it tomorrow. It's nice to be in the end game.

One more small topic. Today was only Day 23 of writing The Rise of a Warrior but already I am SO ready to move onto the next story, novella, novel, whatever. Seriously, how do people even spend MONTHS on one story, much less YEARS?

Let's say it takes you one year to write a 60,000 word novel, and let's say you take weekends off. So it takes you 260 days to write a 60,000 word novel. That means you're averaging just over 230 words per day. That's about 15 minutes per day. Seriously? I mean, seriously?

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4756

Writing of "Mouth Watering" (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 3400 words. Total words to date..... 3400 done
(3400 words exactly? I thought about adding a word somewhere just to mess that up.)

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641

Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111
Day 22.... 1139 words. Total words to date..... 47250
Day 23.... 1356 words. Total words to date..... 48606

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 19,943
Total fiction words for the year..... 228,508
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 463,919
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 12, 2015[edit]

Rolled out early at 1:30. An hour to wake up and I'm making a run at the prequel. Could possibly finish it today, then move on to something new. (grin)

Well, no finish today but still in the end game. It's kind of neat being in the end game but not yet having the end in sight. Another bit of the excitement of writing into the dark.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3474

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366

Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111
Day 22.... 1139 words. Total words to date..... 47250
Day 23.... 1356 words. Total words to date..... 48606
Day 24.... 3474 words. Total words to date..... 52080

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 23,417
Total fiction words for the year..... 231,982
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 467,393
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 13, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3. An hour to wake up and I'm doing this, then making a run at the prequel again.

Great GREAT post yesterday (Chapter Four of the WITD Book) over on DWS. All about why you should NOT "give yourself permission" to write sloppy or to fix anything later.

Go. Read. I command you. Whatever.

It couldn't hurt to read Chapter Five of the WITD book too, but I won't recommend the Depth workshop he's talking about in that chapter. I've taken it. I've taken several of Dean's workshops online ($300 a pop) and have learned a great deal. But the Depth workshop, not so much. Plus if you've attended my Writing A Character Driven Story seminar, you know more than you would learn in the Depth workshop. Shrug. Just sayin'. Eighty bucks here vs. three hundred dollars there. Six to seven hours here vs. five thirty- to forty-minute videos there.

But I do encourage you to read his blog on Chapter Four (the link above), especially if you learned WITD from me and were enthusiastic about it and then backed away from it For Whatever Reason. Maybe reading it from DWS' perspective will bring you back into the fold.

Okay, above I wrote "for whatever reason" but the reason is fear. Always. Every time. The fear takes different disguises from "but I HAVE to rewrite" to "I don't have TIME" to "I'm not GOOD enough" to whatever else, most often followed by "no really, though." Yeah, okay.

Preaching to the Choir

One writer I know (not in this group) finally found it easier to say, "Well, I'm just not really a writer" than to free herself of all the myths and Just Write. She emailed me with "I'm not sure what ever made me think I could do this."

Okay, I KNOW what made her think she could do it. It was that tiny little bit of creative voice that could still speak before she finally snuffed it out. THAT'S what made her think she could do it.

Another writer I know got angry with me (yes, Angry) for recommending Heinlein's Rules and WITD. She said it was irresponsible of me. She is a retired English teacher and she "knows" how much work is involved in turning out a novel. After all, she said, she's written and published eight novels, each about 60,000 words, over the past 30 years. Anybody wanna do the math? (As of tomorrow, I will have written and published five novels, a novella, and 25 short stories SINCE October 19, 2014.)

What I WANTED to ask her was "If you're driving home from the grocery and some jerk cuts you off in traffic, almost clipping the right front fender of your car, when you get home do you get all excited and just tell your husband what happened, or do you write it down, then rewrite it, then send it to beta readers, then rewrite it again, then send it to a copy editor for polishing, and THEN tell him about it?"

Yes it is. It's EXACTLY the same thing.

Because seriously, telling a story is just telling a story. That's all. And that story, told from her emotional center instead of burdened with all that stuff she "knows" has to go into it, would be a hell of a lot more interesting than any of her books. (Yes, I've tried to read a couple of them. Ummmm… no.)

Anyway, that's what I WANTED to ask her, but I didn't waste my time.

And the Writing

Okay, in the first two sessions this morning, knocked out just under 2100 words. What a great feeling. But then one of my Texas Rangers turned out to be a completely different character, and I didn't know it until the sentence before it happened. (grin) Holy crapola.

Three more sessions, another just under 2600 words and it's almost 1 p.m. Somehow, it still feels like I'm gonna finish this thing today.

Well, it felt like it, but it ain't happenin'. However, I know I have one scene left to write, probably around 2000 words. I don't want to do it today because my poor widdle bwain is fuzzy. So tomorrow I finish this one and get it out to my first reader. So it will have taken 26 writing days to write this novel.

Still, a very good day of writing (for me) and not an overly taxing day. It serves the greater purpose of letting me know It's time to think about increasing my daily goal.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 5329

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047
Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729

Day 16.... 1468 words. Total words to date..... 34197
Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111
Day 22.... 1139 words. Total words to date..... 47250
Day 23.... 1356 words. Total words to date..... 48606
Day 24.... 3474 words. Total words to date..... 52080
Day 25.... 5329 words. Total words to date..... 57409

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 28,746
Total fiction words for the year..... 237,311
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 472,722 (one day left)
(I decided to keep posting this number through April 14, 2015.)

April 14, 2015[edit]

Well, I hoped to get up early and get hot on the story, but as it turned out I rolled out almost a half-hour after 3.

No matter. Finished The Rise of a Warrior by 11 a.m. and got it off to my first reader. Gonna get off the desk for awhile. No more writing today, though I might regret that later. When I get back from wherever I'll do a cover, etc. so that'll be ready when my first reader gives me the thumbs up.

I find it way cool that I finished this book on the last day of my first full year of writing into the dark. I started that on April 15, 2014. So today's the last day. In that year (I was still editing up through about the end of October), I've written 476,176 words. Thus far in THIS year, since January 1, I've written 240,765, just over 50% of the whole past year total. (grin)

It took 26 writing days to finish The Rise of a Warrior. But for those who are thinking "Ah wait a minute now. How many CALENDAR days did it take?" you know, like I'm tryin' to pull a fast one or something, I went back and checked. The first day was March 9. So it's taken me 36 calendar days, March 9 to April 14, inclusive. So there. But seriously, I only count writing days.

And looking at it from the other side, isn't that cool? It took me 36 days to write this almost 60,000 word novel and I took ten of those days off. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3454

Writing of The Rise of a Warrior (Wes Crowley prequel #1)
Day 1..... 2308 words. Total words to date..... 2308
Day 2..... 1330 words. Total words to date..... 3638
Day 3..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 4641
Day 4..... 3126 words. Total words to date..... 7767
Day 5..... 0703 words. Total words to date..... 8470
Day 6..... 2059 words. Total words to date..... 10529
Day 7..... 3466 words. Total words to date..... 13995
Day 8..... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 17047

Day 9..... 3776 words. Total words to date..... 20823
Day 10.... 3730 words. Total words to date..... 24553
Day 11.... 1534 words. Total words to date..... 26087
Day 12.... 1014 words. Total words to date..... 27101
Day 13.... 2265 words. Total words to date..... 29366
Day 14.... 1669 words. Total words to date..... 31035
Day 15.... 1694 words. Total words to date..... 32729
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Day 17.... 1710 words. Total words to date..... 35907
Day 18.... 3851 words. Total words to date..... 39758
Day 19.... 1181 words. Total words to date..... 40939
Day 20.... 2574 words. Total words to date..... 43515
Day 21.... 2596 words. Total words to date..... 46111
Day 22.... 1139 words. Total words to date..... 47250
Day 23.... 1356 words. Total words to date..... 48606
Day 24.... 3474 words. Total words to date..... 52080
Day 25.... 5329 words. Total words to date..... 57409
Day 26.... 3454 words. Total words to date..... 60863 (done) (total in book 59,181)

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 32,200
Total fiction words for the year..... 240,765
Total fiction words since 4/15/2014..... 476,176 (final entry)

April 15, 2015[edit]

Well I managed to blow off the whole day.

Got up at 2:30 this morning. Spent some time on an edit and offering a critique on some poetry, then popped over to my main site to write a blog post about my determination not to do anymore edits or offer anymore critiques. I stopped doing reviews a few years ago when I realized nobody wanted honesty. (grin) I have to get back to writing. I'm pretty much jonesing here. (grin)

Excellent post over at Steven Pressfield's Blog today about "asks," meaning asking for things from professionals. It's a hoot.

And while I'm pushing other people's blogs here, this is from a comment after Chapter 6 of DWS' WITD book: "Write scenes. Trust the process. Uncertainty is part of the process. This is fun. I can't wait to get back to the keyboard and find out what happens next."

Yep, I know the feeling. That's the best part of writing into the dark. Once you get the hang of it, you enjoy writing to the point that you can't wait to get back to the keyboard to see what happens next.

However, today was a nonwriting day for me. I didn't really plan it, but that's how it turned out. Took a lot of pics (I have GOT to get a new camera), created the cover for The Rise of a Warrior, walked, did some other stuff. Back at the writing tomorrow morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 28,746
Total fiction words for the year..... 237,311

April 16, 2015[edit]

Got up at 3 this morning.

I went back over The Rise of a Warrior, just checking for where the breaks occurred (I use one asterisk to indicate a break, three to indicate a major break). During that process I realized I needed one more transitional scene near the end of the book, so I wrote it. Just a little over 900 words to bridge a gap and correct two inconsistencies. (grin)

I've been reading the comments over at DWS Blog after each posted rough chapter of his WITD book. Frankly, it's a little frightening how many people just don't get it. They either misquote what DWS has written or they take it completely out of context. Ugh. Okay, so I see you guys as MY guys, so if you read that stuff (the comments), please do so with your defense mechanism turned way up.

Just remember that Writing Into the Dark means Trust Your Subconscious Creative Mind. It's very freeing. When you're writing, if you feel like you're in shackles "trying" to "make" everything "right" your conscious-mind critical voice is in control.

Not a lot of writing today. Hope it will be a lot better tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2192 (917 on The Rise of a Warrior)

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30,938
Total fiction words for the year..... 239,503

April 17, 2015[edit]

Got up at 2 this morning. Hit email, reading blogs, etc.

Dean is all finished posting the WITD chapters over at DWS Blog. ()He won't leave this up very long, so if you want it, get it. I'm not sure he covered anything I didn't cover, but much might depend on your POV as a learner. If you read it and learn or "get" only one new thing, it will be well worth it.

Got some good writing done today. Ran around with my buddy Dan for awhile. Got results back from my first reader and published The Rise of a Warrior. Ordered a new DSLR camera, a Sony Alpha A-3000. Got

a great price and it's 20.1 megapixels so I'm good for cover pics now. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2167

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 33,105
Total fiction words for the year..... 241,670

April 18, 2015[edit]

Slept in until 3:30 this morning despite the best efforts of my kitten. Checked email, reading blogs, etc. While I was waiting for coffee water to heat, I published The Rise of a Warrior to Smashwords. (It was broken yesterday.) Glad it's off my desk. While I was working in that mode, I added the cover to my big website over at HarveyStanbrough.com/warrior. There's a pretty thorough description there and an excerpt.

Good post over at DWS today. If you're one who puts a marker (parens, brackets, etc.) in your manuscript so you can come back and fill in a detail later, scroll down and read Dean's Topic of the Night http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public-year-2-month-9-day-17/. It's very good.

Decided early I'm taking the day off writing today. Just watching movies, doing nothing.

Just realized I haven't written the story of the week yet. I have today and tomorrow, so no biggie.

By the way, if you want to study a short story to see how to add tension, not let up, and make your reader's heart pound, get over to Kristine Kathryn Rusch's website and read her free story of the week, Sole Survivor http://kriswrites.com/2015/04/13/free-fiction-monday-sole-survivor. Holy cow. I'm studying it. That's what I thought of it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of "" (story of the week)
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 33,105

Total fiction words for the year..... 241,670

April 19, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning, at my kitten's request. Shrug. She doesn't ask for much. And she's a very sweet baby.

Checked email, read journal entries and some other stuff, then turned to my writing 'puter and pounded out the story of the week. If you want to visit, you can read it (a short-short this week) over on HEStanbrough.com.

Another good post over at DWS today. Seems he's gearing up to give us the chapters of yet another nonfiction book. I recommend visiting. It costs very little time, and the amount of sheer knowledge you can glean from that site Without Buying Anything is nothing short of incredible.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3126

Writing of "The Breath Formed" (short-short story of the week)
Day 1..... 1035 words. Total words to date..... 1035 (done)

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

I keep posting The Marshal of Agua Perlado here because I never know when I might want to work on it instead of or in addition to the second prequel. When I do get back on it, though, it's gonna suffer another "adjustment." Oh well.

Total fiction words for the month..... 36,231
Total fiction words for the year..... 244,796

April 20, 2015[edit]

Up at 2:30 this morning. Checked email, then read journal entries.

Wrote a little on Prequel 2, then took a break reading DWS new blog post. Excellent Topic of the Night on intentionally sloppy writing, especially if you haven't read his WITD posts and the comments.

If anyone would like DWS posts on WITD, complete with the Q&A in the comments, email me separately and I'll send it to you in PDF.

Back to writing, but not really into the easy flow of this one yet. Still making things jive with the other books in the series. It'll break loose soon.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2834

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 39,065
Total fiction words for the year..... 247,6

April 21, 2015[edit]

Slept in 'til almost 3:30 this morning. Checked email, then read journal entries.

Soon it'll be warm enough to walk in the early morning, so I'm thinking of adjusting my schedule again. Maybe bed at 8 or 9 and up at 4. Wake up, then walk at sunup, then the rest of the day to write. But we'll see.

Wrote some on Prequel 2, then took an excerpt for a very entertaining short story of the week. It will post next Monday. If you like irony and laugh-out-loud humor, check it out. I added a few more words to turn the version in the novel into a short story. That's reflected in the numbers below.

By the way, this story will be on the website on Sunday and post to MailChimp subscribers on Monday. The one that's there now is decidedly not humorous, though it has gleaned some rave reviews and even a $50 tip. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3884 (531 on short story)

Writing of "The Brief Happy Career of Judas Talbot, Circuit Preacher" (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 0531 words. Total words to date..... 3405 (done)

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 42,949
Total fiction words for the year..... 251,514

April 22, 2015[edit]

Slept in 'til almost 3:30 again this morning. Checked email, then read a little.

I almost declared this a non-writing day because I'm also proofing the print version of The Rise of a Warrior. Then I remembered the release date isn't until May 1 anyway, so I'll write some and proof some through the day.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3504

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 46,453
Total fiction words for the year..... 255,018

April 23, 2015[edit]

Yeah, this is gonna be a non-entry.

Up at 2:30 but this is a non-writing day for various reasons. Hope to get back to it tomorrow.

A big part of the problem today is that I know the next scene pretty much word for word, or rather what my jerky, intrusive, snotty, control-freak, south-end-of-a-northbound-donkey conscious mind wants the scene to be.

Thing is, I'm not going to allow it. I don't WANT to know it in advance.

I know some of you out there like to know where something's going, how it's all gonna work out and all that, but I just don't. I finally freed myself of all that crap and I don't want it back.

I want to run through the scene with the characters one footprint at a time. What I do NOT want is to force a scene on them as the Almighty Writer on High (angels sing here, "Ahhhahhhhahhhh"). I hate that.

It's like plodding through every long, drawn-out, boring play of a four-hour baseball game after some moron blurts out that the final score was two to one in the thirteenth inning. Uhhhh, ain't gonna happen.

It's boring. I'd rather not write at all, literally.

So no writing today. Tomorrow, we'll see.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 46,453
Total fiction words for the year..... 255,018

April 24, 2015[edit]

Up just before 3 and still under the weather a bit, but I hope to get some writing done today.

Finally shoved away my bully critical voice. If the scene it wanted in this book shows up at all, it'll be in a passing reference.

Over at DWS, good post on how much TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING HASN'T CHANGED to keep up with the times and how writers are still getting sucked in even now in 2015.

Good day of writing, for me, but not all that great for fiction writing. Difficult day with an unscheduled trip to SV, the short furry people who live here bringing in shorter furry people, and then LARGE, BRASH NOISES all day at semi-regular intervals. Ugh.

So I finally spent an hour on the second prequel, then switched to what I think is going to be my next audio lecture but what will begin life as a presentation in the Green Valley Library on Monday, May 4, at 1 p.m.

Umm, oh, and it's free to attend. I'm presenting From Idea to Story, and it's gonna be good. The price is right if any of you want a refresher. (If you're interested, please call or email Duke Southard at 624-5979 or duke@dukesouthard.com.)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1119
Nonfiction words: 2745 (3864 total words for the day, not counted in totals below)

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 47,572
Total fiction words for the year..... 256,227

April 25, 2015[edit]

Up around 2:30.

No fiction writing today.

Finished the handout (nonfiction) for the Green Valley presentation, then finished proofing The Rise of a Warrior. Took a break and went outside and almost immediately wrenched my back. I'll spend the rest of the day on the couch. Here's the note again about Green Valley in case anyone is still reading this and wants to go.

"From Idea to Story," Green Valley Library, Monday, May 4, at 1 p.m., free to attend. The price is right if any of you want a refresher and there will be some stuff that's new to some of you. (If you're interested, please call or email Duke Southard at 624-5979 or duke@dukesouthard.com.)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 47,572 (Irks me that this is staying so low.)
Total fiction words for the year..... 256,227

April 26, 2015[edit]

Up around 3:30. Emails and journal stuff and reading and nursing my aching back. Ugh.

Got back into the prequel today. Not as good a writing day as I'd hoped, but I suspect tomorrow will be better. I hope it's a LOT better. I've pretty much written off April as being a good writing month for me for fiction. I'll be lucky to break 60,000 words.

My daily goal is 3,000 words. April has 30 days. Math doesn't lie.

I'm thinking about opening this up to the public, for anyone who wants to see what professional writing really is. Any comments? (I would NOT open it to posting but only to subscribers.) I was thinking maybe it would slap some of the folks out there in the valleys of the sun awake to what writing can be. Thoughts?

DWS says don't teach WITD and don't advertise your writing numbers because writers aren't bullet proof until they've been around a b'jillion years in the writing biz like Dean has, but then it dawned on me: I'm bullet proof too. Who can harm my "career" as a writer just because I write "fast" (meaning I put time in the chair)? Nobody. So again, thoughts?

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2567

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 50,139 (Irks me that this is staying so low.)
Total fiction words for the year..... 258,794

April 27, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 this morning. Emails and journal stuff. Determined to get a good day of writing for a change.

But first (there seems always to be a "but first") I stopped over at the big website and wrote a new blog post. I'll be very interested to see what sort of feedback I get from that post. I expect either no comments or very few. We'll see.

Great post today over at DWS on how to create a physical manifestation of your ebooks and get them into physical stores.

Not a lot of writing today. A lot of other stuff going on. But the story's flowing SO nicely now, so I really don't mind. When I leave it right now, for a break or for the day, I know when I come back it will continue to flow. What a great feeling.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1812

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 51,951 (Irks me that this is staying so low.)
Total fiction words for the year..... 260,606

April 28, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2 again this morning. Per usual, emails and journal stuff while I woke up.

Great post today again over at DWS. For one thing he's started posting the individual chapters of a new book called The Stages of a Fiction Writer. And below that is his usual Writing in Public post.

Can't really gripe about my low numbers this month. I've been slacking; that's all there is to it. Maybe better tomorrow. The story's moving along just fine. I'm just being lazy I guess.

As soon as I can figure out how to make it a smooth transition, I'm going to revise this website. Those of you who want to actively post please email me or comment below to let me know that. Thanks.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2264

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 54,215
Total fiction words for the year..... 262,870

April 29, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 1 this morning. Checked email and journal entries.

Spent a few hours trying to figure out some things and stomping out a few wildfires. I figured out a solution to my dilemma regarding this blog. You must forgive me. I don't mean to seem indecisive. Here's the upshot:

I will leave this particular journal and website as they are, period. If you want to post here, you are welcome to do so. If you don't want to post here, that's fine too. I've decided not to take this particular blog public, so feel free to do whatever you like without fear of someone "out there" seeing what you're doing with your writing, etc. Keydokey? (grin)

In the meantime, I learned this morning that I can set up two separate blogs over on my main website. (You have to set up a different feed on your RSS burner... or something like that. I did it, but I couldn't explain it.)

So from now on, my "main" instructive blog that posts every ten days (now called Pro Writers after the

category I most often post under over there) will go to the 500+ member group of subscribers as it always has. You can see those main blog posts now under the Pro Writers tab on the menu.

My new blog posts (under The Journal tab on the menu) will go to another group. Some of you are in that group right now, but feel free to unsubscribe since you're seeing the same thing here. Anyway, people will be able to sign up specifically to receive those posts instead of all the posts, and people who are on my big main list won't have to put up with my inane ramblings in The Journal. (grin) So all figured out, I think.

After my "regular" blog posts and goes out on May 1 so I know everything is working, I'll announce the new Journal blog over there. And again, that won't affect this one. I'll post here, but I'll also post there. I really do want to spread the wealth to the few would-be writers out there who aren't absolutely certain they already know everything. (grin)

GAWD I wish someone had been writing a blog like this (The Journal) and had let me in on it thirty or forty years ago. And yes, I'm aware there was no Internet back then, but you know what I mean.

And I decided to take a day off writing the novels. I'm gonna go out and play with my new camera instead. If there's time later maybe I'll write the next short story of the week.

Yeah, well, no short story, no nada today, though I did submit five short stories today to magazines in St. Louis. One from Harvey, two from Gervasio, one from Nick Porter and one from Eric Stringer. Great fun. If you're interested in the names and URLs of the magazines, let me know and I'll send them to you.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 10… 2264 words. Total words to date…… 22986
Day 11… XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9…… 1003 words. Total words to date…… 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10…. XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month……. 54,215
Total fiction words for the year……. 262,870

April 30, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just after 2 this morning. Emails first, then reading.

Ann reminded me in her post that today is the last day of the month. Ugh. I'll be glad to see April pass this year. I planned to make a last-day push to hit at least 2/3 of my goal (60,000 words). Turns out I didn't even hit my daily goal. Go figure.

Oh, the magazines I mentioned yesterday, one is Mystic Illuminations http://mysticilluminations.org. It's a beautiful new online literary journal that might appeal to some of you. Limit on prose is 4,000 words though.

I have a new favorite quote: "Jesus, where the hell is everybody when they first deliver the typing paper? Where are all the 'helpers' when those boxes full of silence come in? Blank. Both sides. No clue, no instructions enclosed on how to take just twenty-six letters and endlessly rearrange them so that they can turn them into a mirror of a part of our lives. Try it sometime." ~ Larry Gelbart

Well, I wrote a couple of sessions on the second prequel and that was it. I thought I'd write the short story for this week and then get back to the prequel, but instead I drifted over to work on my new website.

I took most of the afternoon setting that up and playing with it. I'll launch my new public version of The Journal from there sometime in early May. I'm heading out for a couple days off in the Lower Gila Box north of Lordsburg NM tomorrow, so no reason to start it before I get back.

In fact, I'm also teaching that presentation over in Green Valley on Monday, May 4, so I'll probably start posting to the new journal on May 5. The posts over there will be the same as the ones here, but probably more involved. Like I'll probably do a topic of the day or something over there since it's for folks who don't "get" this stuff yet.

And I still haven't written the short story of the week for this week yet (due on Monday). I'll do that in the early morning tomorrow before we head out to the Lower Gila Box. And I will do it. I fear breaking my streak a lot more than I fear writing a short story at the last second. (grin)

Great post today over at Dean's place. His regular post is nothing, but he also posted Chapter One of Stages of a Fiction Writer.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2125

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11..... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 56,340 (bad, very bad)
Total fiction words for the year..... 264,995

May 1, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Read and responded as necessary to emails first , then journal entries.

Straight to a short story this morning. I really don't want to break this streak. Been going since I posted the first story on April 15 last year, so....

For this new month, I'm starting with what should be a fairly good writing day today, then probably a poor one tomorrow and Sunday (camping) and maybe Monday (Green Valley). Interested to see how much I can accomplish of my 9,000 word goal over those three days.

Well, not a good writing day, really, but decent enough, plus a short, brisk walk. No more writing today.

I'm gonna finish packing for the trip. I probably won't post tomorrow and maybe not Saturday. I'll catch up when I get back.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2312

Writing of "but babies are just so cute!" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 2312 (done)

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 11... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 2312
Total fiction words for the year..... 267,307

May 4, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3 this morning. Read and responded as necessary to emails.

Camping the last two days in the Lower Gila Box wilderness (north of Lordsburg NM) took a toll (I'm still tired) but I got a lot of great future cover pics.

Good blog post on Why Publishers Fight Digital over on Hugh Howey's site. It's long. I skimmed it.

Okay, zero writing for May 2 and 3. I'm teaching the Green Valley presentation today (update: about 30 attendees, nary a book sale... I am a moron) and I'm still recovering from the trip so no writing today either. So this is basically a placeholder post.

I'll fire up my fiction pen again tomorrow morning, and tomorrow afternoon I'll post an enhanced version of The Journal on My New Site.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 11... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 2312
Total fiction words for the year..... 267,307

May 5, 2015[edit]

No time to pretty this one up, so I'm just gonna post what I posted at the other site this time. (grin) I'll try

to abbreviate this one in the future.

Okay, this is my premier post on the new version of The Journal. More than anything, this will give you an idea of the kind of thing to expect from this site.

Rolled out right at 3 this morning. Read and responded as necessary to emails.

Still a little worn out from camping in the Lower Gila Box wilderness (north of Lordsburg NM) and then the presentation at Green Valley, so I didn't expect a really good writing day today. It turned out better than I expected. Of course, I'll take it. (grin)

Also, I'm excited that I'm back to writing both the second prequel and the sequel to my trilogy. Woohoo! See results below.

Topic of the Night: Learning

Two things all professional writers have in common are 1) a hunger to continue to learn and improve their craft and 2) a healthy level of discernment (a BS meter).

I am constantly reading and learning from those who are more advanced than I, and I recommend you do the same. If a book or story you've just read really struck you in some way, AFTER you've read it for pleasure, go back and try to figure out what the writer did and how he did it to affect you so strongly.

You will do all of that with your conscious, critical mind. That's okay. That's how you learn. Read and study. Take seminars. Listen. Collect all of that with your conscious mind.

What you need, what will work for you in your own writing, will seep down into your subconscious. And while you're writing, it will come out through your fingertips onto the page in your own scenes and settings and characters.

Here's what I mean. When you're writing, do you have to consciously think of how to form each particular letter in a word?

Of course not. Because it's in your subconscious.

Do you have to consciously try to remember that you have to put a period after a sentence or quotation marks around dialogue? Again, no. It's already in your subconscious.

You also don't have to consciously think about making sure you have a subject and a verb in a sentence. It's in your subconscious.

With practice, all of this other will be in there too.

For those of you who are new here, I recommend you visit my "big" website at HarveyStanbrough.com. Spend a little time. Sign up for my instructional blog there. There are many, MANY free resources there (see the right sidebar).

Just a reminder. If any of you decide to take any of my audio lectures, mention that you heard about them from me in Green Valley or that you heard about them in The Journal, and I'll give you a discount.

Finally, you're safe here. You're safe with me. I will never EVER pretend knowledge. If I don't know it and practice it, I don't teach it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3846

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11..... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted)
Day 10.... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754

Total fiction words for the month..... 6,158
Total fiction words for the year..... 271,153

May 6, 2015[edit]

Note: I'm sending this to an old list. If any of you would rather not receive it, please feel free to unsubscribe via the link at the bottom of the email. Also, this first time you might get two posts, for May 5 and 6. I'm putting this notice on both posts. If you receive both, that's a glitch. From now on you'll receive only one post each day. If you did NOT get the first one tonight, I suggest you go back and read it. Go to the site and click The Journal tab.

Didn't get up until 3:30 this morning. Ugh. I much prefer anytime from 2 to 3 a.m. Read and responded as necessary to emails during the first half-hour to an hour to unfreeze my brain, then to the writing.

I wrote a new blog post over at the main site today, a post on Learning. It's a little bit of what I put here yesterday plus some other stuff.

Topic of the Night: Persistence

Sometimes you do everything right. You get your coffee, make your way to the computer. You perform your ritual (mine is email etc.), then turn to your writing. You sit down and put your fingers on the keyboard and— nothing.

Yeah, nothing. Nada. Zilch. Zip.

Now what do you do?

You quit. For about five minutes or maybe ten. You go do something else, even if it's nothing but walking around the house.

Just go away, and then come back to your computer, sit down and write.

It might not happen the first time. It might not happen the second. But if you stay with it, it will happen.

And it will be good.

This morning, I did all that stuff up there. Unfortunately, I have the attention span of a gnat. I recently bought a new camera, and I'm still learning the ins and outs. (I'm inept. And I SO wanna be ept… or something.)

So I took a few pics.

Well, then I hadda download them, then criticize them. They didn't turn out like I had hoped they would, and that actually upset me a little. Not much, but just enough to slather a thin layer of nervousness over everything else I tried to do for the next few hours. Including writing.

So from 3:30ish until around 10, despite having fulfilled my ritual and despite having made several runs at my writing 'puter, I didn't write.

3:30 to 4:30, Emails etc.

4:30 to — oh look. There's my camera. Read manual, shoot a few in my office. Sun comes up. There's a new bloom on the cactus outside my window. Shoot a few out there, barefoot, my tootsies freezing at 60-some degrees. Shoot a few others, download them, look them over, whine, gripe, be massively annoyed. And then it was 8:30.

To the writing 'puter. Nope, nothing.

Every half-hour or so, to the writing 'puter.

Finally, finally, at 10:15ish the words began to flow. Finally.

So the message here is Persist. Writing isn't the boss of you. Keep coming back until the characters relent, reach up, take your hand, and say something like, "Okay, c'mon in an' let's get this thing started."

Believe me, it's worth it.

Advisory: If you do NOT keep coming back— if something stops you from writing and you just give up on the day— soon you won't be writing at all. Please don't let that happen.

Okay, not a really bad day today, but as always I'm thinkin' tomorrow will be better. I got nothing done on the sequel. All fiction writing today was on the as-yet unnamed second prequel.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2960

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)

Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11..... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721
Day 12... 2960 words. Total words to date..... 30681

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10.... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754
Day 11.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 9,118
Total fiction words for the year..... 274,113

May 7, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Read and responded as necessary to emails, then to this post, actually, and then to the writing.

Topic of the Night: Heinlein's Rules

To me, this is a life or death topic. I wouldn't be here as a real writer if I hadn't stumbled across Heinlein's Rules.

Robert Heinlein called them his "Business Habits for Writers," and they were tucked unobtrusively, almost as an afterthought, into the back end of an essay he wrote in 1947. The essay was by invitation and was included in Of Worlds Beyond: The Science of Science Fiction Writing (1947, Fantasy Press, Ed. L. A. Eshbach). I found a copy in good condition for around $30.

I hasten to add, these business habits are NOT specifically for SF writers but for all writers of fiction in any genre. One woman I mentioned these rules to said they wouldn't apply because she doesn't write science fiction. Groan. I detest intentional ignorance.

Toward the end of his essay, which was titled "On the Writing of Speculative Fiction," Heinlein wrote,

I have a guilty feeling that all of the above maybe have been more for my amusement than for your edification. Therefore I shall chuck in as a bonus a group of practical, tested rules which, if followed meticulously, will prove rewarding to any writer.

I shall assume that you can type ... that you can spell and punctuate and can use grammar well enough to get by. These things are merely the word carpenter's sharp tools. He must add to them these business habits:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you start.
3. You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order (Harlan Ellison added, "And then only if you agree").

4. You must put it on the market.
5. You must keep it on the market until sold.

Today, in this exciting new world in which independent publishing has returned full force, rules 4 and 5 would be amended only slightly:

4. You must publish your work so readers can buy it.
5. You must keep it published so more readers can buy it.

Heinlein continues:

The above five rules really have more to do with how to write speculative fiction than anything written above them. But they are amazingly hard to follow— which is why there are so few professional writers and so many aspirants.

Today should have been a lot better day. My neighbor's Corgy has an annoying "Bark BARK" that he repeats about every five seconds all afternoon. Grrrrrr. His name is Louie. I'm going to kill him in my next short story or novel. It will not be an easy death.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3002

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11..... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721
Day 13... 2960 words. Total words to date..... 30681
Day 14... 3002 words. Total words to date..... 33683

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10.... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754
Day 11.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 12,120
Total fiction words for the year..... 277,115

May 8, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 1 this morning. Read and responded as necessary to emails, then went straight to the writing.

Topic of the Night: Trust Your Subconscious Creative Mind

Every writer I know at one time or another has said (to me or to others while I was eavesdropping) that they want to develop their own unique voice. "I have to say it my way," they'll say. "I don't want it to sound

like anyone else."

I've even known writers who refuse to read works by other writers in the chosen genre because they're afraid the other writers' "style" will taint their own.

It won't taint anything. I will inform and improve, but it won't taint.

And weirdly, then those same writers will think nothing of rewriting a story, sometimes several times, to "polish" it.

They don't understand. What a writer starts with the first time she writes a story is her own, unique voice. What she ends up with after all that so-called polishing is a bit of tripe that reads exactly like everything else in the genre, only not good.

Know why it isn't as good? Because most of those professional writers didn't rewrite their work to death.

That's right. They didn't polish their unique voice off of it.

Again, if you want to find your unique voice, Trust Your Subconscious. It's been making up stories and telling them since long before you even knew the alphabet.

But wait. I know. Your voice sounds boring to you, doesn't it?

Know what? That's because it's with you 24/7/365.

To other people, your voice sounds unique. Think about that. You know it's right.

So trust it. Your subconscious knows a great deal more about telling a good story than your conscious mind does. Your conscious mind is a guard. You use it to learn, and you use it to keep you from doing stupid things like swimming with sharks and leaning your palm on a hot burner and stepping off a 1,000 foot drop.

Even Bradbury said "Nobody's ever thought their way to anything in literature."

Your conscious mind exists solely to safeguard you. It won't allow you to do or say (or write) things that are outside accepted norms. If that's all right with you, fine. But think about that for a moment. You already have nothing to say that hasn't be said before, and if you are ruled by your conscious, critical mind, you can't even say it in an original way.

Good luck with that. Frankly, if it were me, I'd throw away my writing stuff and go sell Earth shoes or something.

Not a bad day writing today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3422

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720

Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11..... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721
Day 13... 2960 words. Total words to date..... 30681
Day 14... 3002 words. Total words to date..... 33683
Day 15... 3422 words. Total words to date..... 37105

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10.... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754
Day 11.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 15,542
Total fiction words for the year..... 280,537

May 9, 2015[edit]

Up at 2:30 this morning with a good night's sleep. Read and responded as necessary to emails, then went straight to the writing.

Well, between the pets doing strange, frustrating things and some other things going on this morning, I got zilch done other than the topic below before 9 a.m. I started three different stories to knock out the story of the week (has to post by Monday to keep my streak going) but none worked out. It happens sometimes. (shrug)

A few days ago I posted about Persistence. That's what I'm doing today. Being persistent. I'm posting this because I want you to know not all of my days are easy for writing either. But all that matters is what's there at the end of the day.

So although I've been up over 6 hours already, my writing day today will begin at 9 a.m. I'll take a break, come back, take a break, come back, etc. until the writing picks up again. What I won't do is just give up on the day. That's the lesson here. It isn't when you write, it's THAT you write. Now, I was going to write the story of the week today, and I still might if something occurs to me, but for now, it's back to the second prequel.

Today is my sixteenth day of writing on it. As of today I have over 40,000 words. I should finish this novel sometime in the next two or three days.

Topic of the Night: Spending Time in the Chair

There is a pervasive myth that writing "fast" is writing bad. The myth is based on the notion that if you write a novel in a period of days instead of at least several months, it must be badly written. It's just not true.

Productivity in writing boils down to two things: discipline (a work ethic) and Heinlein's Rules, especially Rule 3 in this case.

Not too long ago one woman told me she could spend all day on one sentence. Seriously? How boring must that be?

If you're going over and over and over your writing, counting the number of times you use "that" or

"which" and making sure you alternate them (they're not interchangeable) or checking sentence structure (yaaawn, stretch), yeah, it's gonna take you a year or two or ten to write your novel. And you know what? When you finally finish, it's going to be horrible. See yesterday's post about polishing the good off of your work.

Write the thing. Write it as well as you can per your current skill level, finish it, ship it off to a first reader and maybe a proofreader to look for mixups between "waist" and "waste" or "rode" and "road" and then publish it.

Then start the next one.

That's step one to being a professional writer.

Step two is spending time in the chair. I was saying in a presentation a few days ago (as I write this), would you call yourself a mechanic if you only spent a few hours a month under the hood of a car?

Now learning is good. In fact, it's essential. But no matter how much you learn about being a mechanic, you aren't a mechanic if you don't spend some time fixing cars. Endlessly attending seminars and conferences about being a mechanic is not being a mechanic. Talking about being a mechanic is not being a mechanic. Thinking about being a mechanic is not being a mechanic. Being a mechanic means getting under the hood and doing your job.

Same thing goes for writing.

If you call yourself a writer, shouldn't you actually write? Okay, it's a free country. You certainly may call yourself anything you want, but you can't actually BE a writer if you don't write.

I write 1,000 words per hour. If that sounds like a lot, do the math. It's 17 words per minute. That leaves me a lot of time for staring off into space, researching the name of that particular type of pastry the character wants to buy, etc.

Then I spend three or four or five hours in the chair. Every day.

Yep, I have a job that I only have to work three or four or five hours per day.

If you spend only three hours per day doing your job, Mr. or Ms. Writer Person, and if you hit around 17 words per minute, and if you do that only five days per week, taking weekends off, you will write 15,000 words per week. That's a 60,000 word novel in 4 weeks.

Now why again do you think it should take a year or two to write a novel?

Decide to write the best story you can the first time through, then spend the time in the chair, and you'll be amazed at how much good writing you turn out.

Okay, I just realized I haven't written the short story for this week yet. I've had that streak (at least one short story per week) going since April 15 last year, so I don't want to break it now. Not a bad day writing today, but no short story. I'll do that tomorrow. Or sometime before Monday at 9 a.m. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3563

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Eventually (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275

Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721
Day 13... 2960 words. Total words to date..... 30681
Day 14... 3002 words. Total words to date..... 33683
Day 15... 3422 words. Total words to date..... 37105
Day 16... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 40668

Writing of **The Marshal of Agua Perlado** (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10.... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754
Day 11.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 19,105
Total fiction words for the year..... 284,100

May 10, 2015[edit]

Up at 2 this morning after a really rough night. (I'm not revealing that to complain, but only to be candid. Sometimes illness and other "bad" things happen. Each time you must decide whether to use those things as an excuse not to write.) I read and responded as necessary to emails, then came to write this journal and the topic below.

After I finish the topic of the night, I might get more done on the novel today, but more than likely today will be a day off the novel. I really need to get the short story written for the week. Then I have to do all the business stuff: design and create a cover, post the whole thing to HEStanbrough.com, set it to go live tomorrow morning via MailChimp, publish it to Smashwords and Amazon (within a week it will be available in every major ebook outlet in over 100 nations worldwide) and post the cover to my Short Fiction page over at HarveyStanbrough.com.

Topic of the Night: The Numbers Game and Failing to Success

A couple days ago I went over Heinlein's Rules here. If you follow those rules, you will be a professional writer, period.

Not only that, but others will consider you prolific, even if you're not.

As an aside, still others will consider you a "hack writer," again, even if you're not. They won't read your work. They'll just leap to the assumption that if you're producing a lot of short fiction and novels, all of it must be bad. Don't Worry About It. Those folks will blather on among themselves for awhile, and then they'll go back to attending conferences, talking about writing, thinking about writing, bragging about being a writer, and saying what terrible drudgery writing is but that they simply must write because they owe it to the world or some garbage like that. And they'll continue not producing anything more substantial than a grocery list.

Okay, back to the numbers game and failing to success. My personal definition of "a prolific writer" is one who produces one million (1,000,000) or more publishable words of fiction per year. For that reason, my

personal goal is to write at least 3,000 publishable words of fiction per day. If I do that for a year, on Day 365 I will have written 1,095,000 publishable words of fiction. That would make me prolific.

Periodically I check in with myself to see how I'm doing. Sort of bad news. Through yesterday, May 9, 128 days have passed since January 1. During that 128 days, I've written 284,100 publishable words of fiction. My daily average thus far this year is 2219.5312 words per day.

If I keep that average through the rest of the year, on December 31 I will have written 810,128 publishable words of fiction. To me, that is not prolific.

But it ain't bad either. Will I take it? Of course.

I've failed up to now in meeting my daily goal, but averaging over 2200 words per day feels like success to me.

I've failed (thus far) in meeting my annual goal, but writing over 800,000 words of fiction in a year feels like success to me.

So yes, I will have failed, but I will have failed to success.

Okay, I suggest everyone read Dean Wesley Smith's post today: Stages of a Fiction Writer, Chapter Four. He's posting this book up there one chapter at a time. Free.

Should be an interesting day. Again I didn't get started on the actual fiction writing until late, this time due to getting very little sleep. Regarding writing the short story of the week, sometimes it feels good to take a day off from my larger WIP and play with characters in a different world for awhile, but not always. Today I'm really jonesing to get back to writing the novel, so I've decided to do the two-birds-with-one-stone thing. I'll write a scene or two in the novel that can double (with very minor adjustments) as a new short story. It never hurts to publish a short story that will publicize a forthcoming novel.

UPDATE: Okay, my characters had a change of heart. A new cast popped into my head. So there y'go. That's just the way things happen sometimes.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3859

Writing of "Respect" (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 1676words. Total words to date..... 1676 (done)

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Pretty Soon (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720
Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721
Day 13... 2960 words. Total words to date..... 30681
Day 14... 3002 words. Total words to date..... 33683

Day 15… 3422 words. Total words to date…… 37105
Day 16… 3563 words. Total words to date…… 40668
Day 17… 2183 words. Total words to date…… 42851

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10…. 1236 words. Total words to date…… 20754
Day 11…. XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month…… 22,964
Total fiction words for the year…… 287,959

May 11, 2015[edit]

Not up and about until 3:30 this morning. Caught up a little bit on my sleep.

Story of the week is live on HEStanbrough.com and went live on Amazon this morning. So I added the cover and Amazon link to the Short Stories page at HarveyStanbrough.com. Then I wrote the topic of the night.

Looking forward to writing more on the novel. It's winding down to the final few scenes, and that's always the most exciting time for me as I'm writing. Often that's where the characters surprise me the most, and that's just a great deal of fun.

Topic of the Night: Read Everything, Think Critically, Accept Only What Feels Right

Many of you know I put a lot of stock in Dean Wesley Smith's advice, but sometimes he tosses a blanket over a topic and beats it to death with assumptions and generalizations. When he's talking about things he knows about, his advice can be golden. I've learned a great deal from him.

However, he has his prejudices like anyone else. I suspect he was burned once by a bad freelance editor (or book doctor) who didn't know what he was doing. This is precisely why, when I was editing (yes, freelance copyediting), I offered writers a free sample edit. That was a complete edit of up to a few pages. In that way, my ability sold itself.

Anyway, as what I suspect is the result of a bad personal experience, DWS seemingly endlessly tries and convicts "book doctors" and "freelance editors." Among the charges he levels without any possible way of actually knowing about all book doctors or all freelance editors, he says

- they have never written a novel (I have written several and I could go back to editing tomorrow)
- they have no experience at all in commercial fiction writing (see above)
- they know only what English teachers taught them (no, some of them have a feel for the language)
- they have no idea what will make a novel sell (some do, and a good one has a very good idea what will *keep* a novel from selling and will steer you around that)

Now it's worthwhile to note that Dean himself says after he's written a novel, he sends it to a first reader (his wife, Kris Rusch) and then sends it off to a copyeditor. However, in his rant against "freelance editors" he doesn't mention that he uses a copyeditor. That's a little misleading to say the least.

Perhaps his copyeditor is licensed, but I'd bet not. Would he have hired this person in the first place if the copyeditor had said he or she was a "freelance editor" instead of a "copyeditor"? I'm just sayin', to many people in the business, the terms are interchangeable.

As a disclaimer, let me say that there are many so-called freelance editors (and proofreaders and

copyeditors and book doctors) out there who don't have a sense of the language. There are many who mean well, but don't know what they're doing. And yes, there are some who are strictly scam artists and mean only to separate you from your hard-earned money.

There are also many out there who are very good at what they do and they can help you improve your work. I personally vouch for some of them on my website at HarveyStanbrough.com (see the A-Copyeditors link in the right sidebar).

So do a little research. At a minimum, request a free sample edit. If your would-be copyeditor won't let you see up front what he or she can do for you, don't hire that editor. Move on to the next one.

I take exception to Dean's post not only because I was a very good freelance copyeditor who always gave more than I was paid for. I take exception because he's a trusted, respected source of information and he's steering all writers away from what some of them might actually need, and he's doing so based solely on generalizations, assumptions, and half-truths (i.e., all freelance editors are bad, but he sends his own work to a copyeditor).

As a related aside, DWS also has said many times, "real" editors (by this he means "not freelance") work for publishers in New York. Period. All other editors are charlatans who are only out to scam you out of your money. All of them. I guess the twenty-something "editors" working in New York for the Big Five are licensed. But I'm not gonna ask him.

Okay, so the point here is the title of this topic, and it kind'a piggybacks on the Learning topic I did recently and the Learning post (http://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/learning/) over on HarveyStanbrough.com. If you're a writer, it's important that you keep learning. In that regard, I recommend you

- Do a little research to discover your would-be advisor's level of experience (I never accept advice on a particular topic from anyone who has less experience with that topic than I do)
- Even after you've decided to trust the source to provide good advice, Think Critically about what you're being told
- Discard ANY advice from ANYONE that's based on broad generalizations and assumptions. All of it. Period.
- Discard any advice that doesn't feel right to you or work for you

I do recommend DWS as an excellent source of information regarding production as a writer, getting depth in your writing, etc. However, I've noticed over the past several years he DOES base some information on assumptions and generalizations. He slips them in every now and then. Fortunately, they're pretty blatant so they aren't difficult to identify and steer around. I'm just sayin', forewarned is forearmed.

Okay, due to various distractions, again I didn't get started on the actual fiction writing until late.

Now to the prequel, for which I still don't have a title. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2047

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Pretty Soon (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 1275
Day 2..... 1275 words. Total words to date..... 3442
Day 3..... 2091 words. Total words to date..... 5533
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 8367
Day 5..... 3353 words. Total words to date..... 11720

Day 6..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 15224
Day 7..... 1119 words. Total words to date..... 16343
Day 8..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 18910
Day 9..... 1812 words. Total words to date..... 20722
Day 10... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 22986
Day 11... 2125 words. Total words to date..... 25111
Day 12... 2610 words. Total words to date..... 27721
Day 13... 2960 words. Total words to date..... 30681
Day 14... 3002 words. Total words to date..... 33683
Day 15... 3422 words. Total words to date..... 37105
Day 16... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 40668
Day 17... 2183 words. Total words to date..... 42851
Day 18... 2047 words. Total words to date..... 44898

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10.... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754
Day 11.... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 25,011
Total fiction words for the year..... 290,006

May 12, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little before 2 this morning. Checked and responded to email stuff, then started right in on the novel.

Might possibly finish the novel (prequel 2) today. When you're writing off into the dark, you just write until the characters lead you to the ending. Works every time. But sometimes you think (conscious mind) you're getting closer to the ending than you actually are. Other times you might actually write beyond the ending. I did that on my first novel, but I only overwrote it by two or three sentences.

Topic of the Night: Finishing

Heinlein's first rule is You must write. The second rule is You must finish what you write.

I think I hope I'm able to finish the story of Wes Crowley and the others. I say "I think" I hope I'm able to finish because that will not be a happy occasion. Maybe not finishing the whole thing would be better. If I finish it, I suspect I will mourn.

Y'know, this whole time I thought this was a very disjointed process. I mean, I wrote a novel, then a sequel, then another sequel and thought that was the end of that. Separate works, all that.

It wasn't.

I soon realized the character wasn't through with me, not by half. So I started a sequel. That would have been book four.

But then the younger version of the same character began tugging on my sleeve. He wanted to tell the story from the time he and his buddy Mac joined the Texas Rangers. Only then would I have told a complete story, he said.

So I stopped writing the sequel (in mid-scene) and started a prequel. Twenty-six writing days later I published The Rise of a Warrior. So that became book one.

Then I started the current WIP, which I'll finish today and which will become book two. I already know there is at least one more prequel and possibly one more after that. Then will come the original trilogy, and I'm about a third of the way through that sequel I started a few months ago. When I finish that one, it will be either book 7 or 8 in the series.

But it isn't really a series.

Finally, as I'm about to finish the fifth book I've written detailing these characters' exploits, it dawns on me that I'm not really writing a series at all. I'm writing a single, long story. And I'm "unstuck in time," as Dean Smith and Kris Rusch call it. In other words, I don't have to write the thing in linear fashion, the way it will eventually be read. I'm able to write a sequel, then a prequel, etc.

It will all be one big story, and it will read smoothly from page one of the first book through the final page of whatever the last book turns out to be, but it will have been written a bit here, a piece there. I find it very cool that my characters allowed me to do that.

Even cooler that they TRUSTED me to do that.

Now, I'm not expecting another sequel after the one I started awhile back, but I'm not discounting the possibility either. In The Marshal of Agua Perlado, I have no idea what's going to happen (writing into the dark, remember?) except that Wes and a beauty named Coralín are going to be married.

But get this… even though they aren't yet married, I already know their children's names. Isn't that strange? But not really, I guess. I mean, Wes knows the names of his own children because in his world it's already happened. I just haven't written it all down yet.

And seriously, who would he rather confide in than me? Well, other than Coralín.

No matter how long this story goes, I think I'll be sad to type the final word.

And I won't celebrate. I celebrate the beginning of a story, whether it's flash fiction, a short story, or a novel. I just can't bring myself to celebrate finishing something I enjoy doing.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 4197

Writing of Gotta Get a Title Pretty Soon (Wes Crowley prequel 2)
Day 1…… 1275 words. Total words to date…… 1275
Day 2…… 1275 words. Total words to date…… 3442
Day 3…… 2091 words. Total words to date…… 5533
Day 4…… 2834 words. Total words to date…… 8367
Day 5…… 3353 words. Total words to date…… 11720
Day 6…… 3504 words. Total words to date…… 15224
Day 7…… 1119 words. Total words to date…… 16343
Day 8…… 2567 words. Total words to date…… 18910
Day 9…… 1812 words. Total words to date…… 20722
Day 10… 2264 words. Total words to date…… 22986
Day 11… 2125 words. Total words to date…… 25111
Day 12… 2610 words. Total words to date…… 27721
Day 13… 2960 words. Total words to date…… 30681
Day 14… 3002 words. Total words to date…… 33683
Day 15… 3422 words. Total words to date…… 37105
Day 16… 3563 words. Total words to date…… 40668

Day 17… 2183 words. Total words to date…… 42851
Day 18… 2047 words. Total words to date…… 44898
Day 19… 4197 words. Total words to date…… 49095 (done)

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10… 1236 words. Total words to date…… 20754
Day 11… XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month…… 29,208
Total fiction words for the year…… 294,203

May 13, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little before 3 this morning. Checked and responded to email stuff.

Today will be a day off from writing. Great timing as I had a ton of business things to take care of (playing on websites, reading a few dry articles, etc.) and just finished the second prequel yesterday. It was enjoyable to relax with my coffee and play with a few technical problems. For one thing, now you can actually see the Comments link at the bottom of this post. Before today, it was almost the same color as the background. For another, I updated plugins on all the websites I manage. Stuff like that. Also took a short walk and carried my camera, so that was fun. Just an enjoyable day off.

Tomorrow, back to the "grind" and the "horrible, terrible drudgery" of writing. Seriously, who comes up with this stuff? (grin)

By the way, excellent comment by Dan Baldwin on yesterday's post. If you haven't read it yet, I recommend it.

Topic of the Night: Taking Time Off

Briefly, if you love what you do, why would you ever want to take a day off?

I don't want to. Ever. If I had my way, I'd write six to eight hours per day, every day. Imagine the production! Imagine the novels and stories I could put out if I could turn around 6,000 to 10,000 words of publishable fiction per day!

But thus far, that isn't to be. I can hit 5,000 words (five hours in the chair) on a really good day, but most days I'm fortunate to make my daily goal of 3,000 words.

The only reason I can think of to take a day off from doing what you love is so you don't end up hating it.

Fortunately, I suppose, I don't have that problem. Fortunately (I suppose), life gets in the way of my passion with forced days off just often enough that I don't feel a need to take a voluntary day off. Yet I'm taking one off today. (shrug)

For example, by now you've probably caught on to the fact that in my "day by day" accounting, I actually record only the writing days. Those can also be chronological, sequential calendar days, but they don't have to be.

I just finished the second prequel in 19 writing days. The final day was yesterday, May 12.
But my first writing day on that novel was on April 16 when I wrote 1275 words to kick it off. So if you wanna wag your finger at me and say something like, "C'mon now, it's REALLY took twenty-seven days, right?"

Right. From April 16 through May 12, inclusive, it actually took 27 days. So out of 27 sequential calendar days, I took 8 forced days off.

That works out pretty well. Twenty-seven days is only one day short of four weeks, and eight days is four weekends, so it's like I took weekends off. And my work days were only three hours long. So not a bad work week. (grin)

For the next new novel I write, perhaps I'll keep track of which days I write and which days I take off. Just, you know, to feed the curiosity cat.

Of course, I still have to return sometime or other to The Marshal of Agua Perlado (current last title in the series), which I started eons ago on March 9, and I still have an SF called Going Back sitting on the back burner as well (started that one way back before I started the first novel on October 19). If Going Back becomes a novel, I guess that's the one all the pundits will think is "legit" because I can honestly say it took me at least several months to write it (grin) even though I've actually spent only 4 days writing it thus far.

Oh well. Enough musing. Think I'll post this. Then I'm gonna go watch NYPD Blue. (If you're wondering, wonderful show to watch to learn to write action and a Brooklyn accent. Mine's on DirecTV, Channel 239, Audience, at 4 p.m. Arizona time.)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Gotta Get Yet Another Title Pretty Soon (Wes Crowley prequel 3)
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754
Day 11... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 29,208
Total fiction words for the year..... 294,203

May 14, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30 this morning. Checked and responded to email stuff. This morning it's back to the writing.

Have to make a trip to Sierra Vista later today, and that's gonna suck up about four hours. But I'll get at least some writing done.

Topic of the Night: Feeling Overwhelmed

For well over a year, I've been practicing pushing down my conscious, critical mind and the fear it brings to the table. Yet this morning as I was going through my morning wake-up ritual, fear flooded over me.

This morning it's back to the writing. I have at least one more prequel to write (it will be book 3) and I've already started the first sequel (The Marshal of Agua Perlado). I also have to write the short story of the week sometime in the next few days or break the streak I've had going since April 15 of last year. So no lack of writing opportunities. No lack of ideas.

But I was overwhelmed. What I'm I gonna write first?

Well, I can't write all of them at once, so I have to pick one.

I can hammer out a good short story in only a few hours. I want to get the siphon going on a novel again, so I need to write one of those.

And that's when the fear hit, in the form of feeling overwhelmed.

Despite the fact that my next novel will be my sixth, and despite the fact that all of those have come since October 19 of last year, a sense of feeling overwhelmed washed over me.

What am I thinking? I can't write a novel. It's too much. It's too big. It's too many words.

Know what? That's true. I can't write a novel.

But I can write a sentence.

I can write a great line of dialogue or descriptive narrative to pull my reader into the story. I can write another sentence, and another. I can write a scene.

There's an old saying: How do you eat an elephant? The answer… one bite at a time.

I can't write a novel, but I can write a scene.

I can't write 40,000 or 50,000 or 60,000 words, but I can write 1,000 per hour. I can write three or four hours per day.

And I can tell a story.

Some stories are short and are accomplished in only a few thousand words. And some stories keep going until you look up 30 days later and you've written a story of several tens of thousands of words. That story would be a novel.

And I know it can happen because it already has.

In the overall story of Wes Crowley and friends, in five novels, I've written 225,252 published words of fiction. How? By not allowing myself to feel overwhelmed. By pushing down my conscious, critical mind and the overwhelming feeling that I can't possibly write a novel. I just recognize and admit that I can't.

And then?

I write the next sentence.

Well, not a lot of writing today, but I did start getting back into writing the sequel, The Marshal of Agua Perlado. I'll talk about that "restarting" process in tomorrow's topic of the night. I should have a pretty good writing day tomorrow as well.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1861

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 10… 1236 words. Total words to date…… 20754
Day 11… 1861 words. Total words to date…… 22615

Total fiction words for the month..... 31,069
Total fiction words for the year..... 296,064

May 15, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30 this morning. Checked and responded to email stuff. This morning it's back to the writing.

Topic of the Night: Restarting After a Layoff

Sometimes we begin a new project with the best of intentions and then we set it aside for one reason or another. Maybe a life event rears its ugly head (death in the family or some other unforeseen event). Or maybe, in the case of my own recent restart, another story intervenes.

As I noted below, I started The Marshal of Agua Perlado (the sequel to the Wes Crowley trilogy I originally wrote) back on March 9. I wrote steadily for a blazing two days before something interrupted me. That something was the writing of the first prequel, The Rise of a Warrior. Frankly, because they were separated chronologically by about twenty-five years, I thought I could write both novels at the same time.

Some writers can do that, maybe. I found out I couldn't.

Long story short, the prequel won out.

As you can see below, I wrote on the sequel for four more days in a row, then skipped a week (writing the prequel) and wrote two days in a row before the sequel drifted off to Back Burner Land.

There it remained until yesterday.

A few days ago I finished the prequel. There is at least one more prequel I want to write for this story, but the sequel, this time, took precedence. I have a feeling this thing is gonna blaze right along to the end. I'm having a ton of fun writing it, and that's what it's all about.

So how do you jump back in and restart after a layoff?

I suggest you follow these three steps, which I first learned from Dean Smith but are more common sense than some deep wisdom:

Read back over what you've already written. Remember, your skills might have improved since you last worked on the project. You might read from the beginning (I did with The Marshal of Agua Perlado) or you might read only the last full scene you wrote.

As you read back over it, allow yourself to touch it, adding and deleting here and there. You can call his a rewrite or whatever, though for my money it really isn't. You should be counting the number of times you use "that," for example, or how many times you use a particular sentence structure. This is only to get you back into the flow of the story.

When you get back to the present in the novel, write the next sentence.

I know, that sounds simple, and it is, but it works. Write the next sentence, then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence.

You'll be amazed how fast you will finish writing the story.

* * *

Okay, back to writing The Marshal of Agua Perlado. Pretty good writing day today.

Oh, and once again the weekend is nearing and I haven't written the story of the week yet. Looking forward to that as well. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3224

Writing of **The Marshal of Agua Perlado** (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839

Total fiction words for the month..... 34,833 (on track to hit 70,000)
Total fiction words for the year..... 292,288

May 16, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30 this morning. Checked and responded to email stuff.

Topic of the Night: Keeping Up with the Joneses

A couple days ago a writer and friend asked in a comment whether I would "address the issue of setting the bar of productivity so high that [some] of us ... can't possibly keep up with you? As much as I want to, I can't keep up. I'm guessing that eliminates me from the 'professional writer' category."

I did respond in a comment, but I know a lot of readers don't go back and read comments. Also, there are at least two separate issues in his question, and I didn't answer them both.

First and foremost, please understand, I don't set the bar of productivity for anyone but myself. Your job as a writer isn't to keep up with me or anyone else. Your job as a writer (and remember, this is a job you took on yourself voluntarily) is to write. Period.

We all live different lives with different requirements, different interests, etc. I wouldn't dream of setting your goals for you. Here's what I recommend to calculate or set your own productivity goals:

1. Figure out about how many publishable words of fiction you can write per hour. (Same goes for other kinds of writing.) Most writers who practice writing into the dark tend to get 750 to 1000 words per hour (that's only 13 to 17 words per minute).
2. Figure out realistically how many hours per day you can write. This doesn't have to be every day. It's your schedule, so set it up the way you want to. (If you feel that you have zero free time every day, email me and ask how to find extra time. I'd be happy to fill you in.)

a. If you write only one hour per day and you put out 1000 publishable words per hour, you will write 30,000 publishable words in a typical month. That's 360,000 words per year.
b. I started to put here that if you write only two hours per week, you will write 110,000 words per year, but that isn't really true. The numbers are there, it's possible, and I'm sure there are exceptions that prove the rule. But the fact is, if writing is such a low priority that you can find only two hours per week to practice your craft, chances are great that other things will take over and the writing will fall away.

3. Prioritize. Do remember, please, that only you can set your own priorities in your life. If you're in prison, then many of your priorities are set for you, but otherwise you set your own priorities. The fact is, when we want something badly enough, we find a way to make it work. When we don't, well, we don't. That's priorities.
4. Write. You can't be a writer unless you write. Yes, it's a free country. You can SAY you're a writer even if you never write anything more substantial than a grocery list. But you can't BE a writer unless you write.
5. This is a bonus. Just know that there is power in streaks. If you want to be a writer, set goals and challenge yourself.

a. If I hadn't set a goal to write a new short story every week back in April, 2014, I wouldn't currently have 92 short stories on the site at HarveyStanbrough.com and another one due by Monday at 9 a.m.
b. If I hadn't set a personal daily goal to write a certain number of publishable words per day back in October, 2014, I wouldn't currently have six novels and a novella finished and be over 25,000 words into another novel.
c. It doesn't matter WHAT goal you set, as long as you set one and then strive to reach it.

Okay, that's one question answered.

Second, if you can't keep up with me does that automatically eliminate you from the "professional writer" category?

No.

I don't keep up with Dean Wesley Smith, but I still consider myself a professional fiction writer.

I don't keep up with ANY of the old pulp writers. Many of them routinely hit over 1,000,000 (that's one million) words per year of published fiction, and they did it on manual typewriters.

As I said above, it isn't about keeping up with anyone else. It's about setting a goal and then striving to achieve it.

Only you can decide whether you are a professional fiction writer. But don't judge yourself based on what I do or on what anyone else does.

In my world, if you're a "professional" anything, that means you engage in a certain activity as your chosen profession.

If you're a professional automobile engine mechanic, you repair engines. If you're a professional house painter, you paint houses. If you're a professional teacher, you prepare lesson plans and conduct classes. If you're a professional writer, you write and you put your work out there so readers can find it.

As I wrote at the outset, I don't write this blog and post my numbers to intimidate anyone or even to challenge anyone. To be honest, I post the numbers "in public" primarily to hold myself accountable. Secondarily, I post the numbers to show other writers and would-be writers what is possible if they follow Heinlein's Rules and if they practice Writing Off Into the Dark. I post these Topic of the Night pieces to share my knowledge. (shrug) Nothing more to it than that.

If my posting on this blog encourages any other writers to greater heights with their writing, good. I am honored.

Finally, just so you know, I blatantly stole the idea for this blog from Dean Wesley Smith, who does something very similar. He calls it Writing in Public. Honestly, I think he got the idea from Harlan Ellison, who at one time set up a chair and small desk in the display window of a department store and wrote short story after short story "in public." He wrote the stories on the spot on a manual typewriter, and as he finished each page, he stuck it to the display window so the readers gathered outside could read it as he wrote it.

Okay, end of topic. I hope all of that helps.

For my own writing, I'm under the weather after a rough night babysitting my ulcer. My own stupid fault. Too much food, and too much salsa on my food. It would be very easy for me to just declare this a nonwriting day and take another day off, but as I wrote above, there is power in streaks. I want to knock out at least a thousand words today (that's only 1/3 of my standard daily goal). This is my way of showing my subconscious that I'm serious, personally, about writing and being a writer.

And that's exactly what I did. I wrote a little bit on the sequel. Just enough to keep my hand in, really. I should feel better tomorrow. I'll do the short story of the week and write more on the sequel then, or at least that's the plan. (grin)

By the way, you can get a free copy of the St. Louis Writers Guild literary journal The Scribe in any ebook format free of charge **HERE**. It contains my short story, "The Breath Formed." I hope you'll download it and consider sharing it with friends and supporting SLWG, a truly vibrant writers' organization.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1052

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891

Total fiction words for the month..... 35,885
Total fiction words for the year..... 293,340

May 17, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30 this morning. Again. Checked and responded to email stuff.

Topic of the Night: Streaks

Sometime or another, in one place or another, I mentioned to someone that Streaks Have Power.

I probably mentioned it over on the "big blog," and I'm sure I mentioned it in at least two or three seminars or writing intensives.

To create a streak, you set a daily or weekly or monthly goal and then achieve it time after time after time. If you've ever worked in one of those places where the management had a sign up that said something like "93 Accident Free Days" and then the number changed each day, you were witnessing a streak.
And even if you weren't the one who got hurt and had ZERO vested interest in the streak continuing, when they reset it back to 0 or 1 Accident Free Days, it disappointed you.

Same way with writing streaks.

My own best streak thus far is my short stories.

Back in April 2014, I set a goal to write and publish a new short story every week. That included writing the story, creating an attractive cover for it, and publishing it to three places: Harvey Stanbrough & Friends Writing in Public, Smashwords, and Amazon.

On the first venue, the story went out free to subscribers, once per week, every week. It still does. Go subscribe. I command you. (grin) Thanks to the latter two venues, within a week or so, the same story was available for sale in over 100 nations worldwide. Cool.

In that particular streak, today I published the 65th short story. That's 65 short stories in 58 weeks. When I post the cover over on HarveyStanbrough.com/short-stories a little later today, it will be the 93rd story cover there.

So what makes streaks so powerful?

When you get a streak going, you don't want to break it. That's it.

And the longer the streak runs, the more it will torque your jaws if you allow it to end. The thing is, as of about 1:30 p.m. today, I have a streak of 65 short stories writing at least one story per week. If I don't post one next week (Monday, May 25) the next time I write a short story my "streak" will be 1 story. Ugh.

The other good thing about streaks and their power is this: If you DO happen to fail, you fail to success.

When Dean Wesley Smith set himself a goal to write one short story per week, his streak broke at 47 stories. Oof. Body punch. On the other hand, in that year, he had written 47 stories. Can that really be called a failure? I don't think so.

Now, if I had said, on April 15 last year, "Y'know, I'm gonna set a goal to write 52 short stories before next April 15," no possible way I would have done it. Then I'd have excused myself. After all, writing 52 short stories in a year is a ridiculously high goal. It's unrealistic.

But that isn't what I did. I set a REALISTIC goal to write at least ONE sparkling, shiny new short story every week. And in that same 52 week period I wrote 59 short stories.

So there y'go. Set yourself a repeating, renewing goal and build yourself a streak. I swear it's worth it. Tell your writing groups and partners and get them to do it with you. Great fun.

Okay, around here I got a lot done today. I could do more, I think, but my brain is on its Frazzled setting so I'm gonna let it rest.

Today I wrote the short story of the week. I also wrote over 1300 new words on the novel, created the

cover for the previous novel and a cover for today's short story. Then I prepublished the previous novel on Smashwords and Amazon and published today's short story on Smashwords and Amazon and my website at HEStanbrough.com (it's free there.)

Not too bad for a tired old man. Then again, maybe that's WHY I'm a tired old man. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4668

Writing of "Normal Louisiana Ladies Club" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 3296 words. Total words to date..... 3296 done

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263

Total fiction words for the month..... 40,553
Total fiction words for the year..... 298,008

May 18, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30 this morning. Again. Checked and responded to email stuff.

Topic of the Night: Getting in My Own Way

Sometimes, probably more often than not, my own biggest problem is Me.

Today I knocked out something over 2000 words before I went walking. Didn't walk all that long. I didn't even need a shower, really, although I took one because that's what you do.

After that, I was fired up to leap back into writing another scene in The Marshal of Agua Perlado.

And I did.

Then I got stuck.

I wasn't stuck like writers usually complain about being stuck though. I was stuck because I really, really liked the scene I had just written. And I wanted folks to see it early. So I excerpted it, then adapted it (changed a few words here and there, added a bit of info to clarify names that readers of the novel would have known but that seem orphaned in the short story, things like that.

Okay, good. The short story of the week for next Monday (5/25) is done early, ready to go. (I wrote it after 9 a.m. this morning, so it's legit for the new week.)

Only now I have to create a promo document for it. The promo document is just a Notepad document that contains the story title, name of the publisher, the story description and Internet search tags so I can copy and paste them into Smashwords and Amazon instead of rewriting them every time. And a cover. I have to find a suitable cover photo, select the right font(s) and create a cover for it. Well, and then I have to publish it to Smashwords and Amazon and my free story website and HarveyStanbrough.com.

Okay. All of that's done so now I can get back to the novel. Three and a half hours later. (groan)

That's okay. Breathe. Fortunately, I had typed well over 2500 words (my daily goal is 3000, remember?) before I started all the insanity, so I have to type only one more session and I can call it a day. (Of course, I don't count the words in the short story in my word count since they're virtually the same as the words in the novel. There are maybe twenty words in the short story that are not in the novel. Not worth the time to figure it out. So I show the word count for the short story, but those words are not duplicated in the totals at the end.)

So that's what I mean about getting in my own way. It's like I ran out in front of myself, stuck out my leg, and tripped me, making me stumble for almost four hours during which I should have been writing or cursing or drinking or something. I don't know. I'm only one guy here.

Usually.

Okay, so back to the novel. I'll write awhile, then post this to the journal website, then watch NYPD Blue. (grin)

Got it. So not a bad day. You can see the word count below, plus another short story (configuring it) plus another cover and getting all that up online and out to contributors.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3268

Writing of "Coralín" (story of the week for May 25)
Day 1..... 2678 words. Total words to date..... 2678 (done, these words not included in totals below)

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531

Total fiction words for the month..... 43,821

Total fiction words for the year..... 301,276

May 19, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 1 this morning. Checked and responded to email stuff.

Topic of the Night: Streaks, Part Two

A couple days ago I wrote a bit about streaks, how powerful they are. If you enjoy writing in the first place, they're also a great deal of fun. And the thing is, if you don't enjoy writing, well, then you probably should be doing something other than reading this.

Yesterday I wrote my 66th short story since April 15 last year. When I put the cover on my Short Stories page at HarveyStanbrough.com/short-stories, it dawned on me that I really enjoyed watching as the number of covers grew. So that's yet another streak. Ninety-four short stories, ninety-four covers. By Monday, the first of June (Good lord willin' an' the creek don't rise), it will be ninety-five covers. Cool.

I always add the newest cover to the first position on the first row. All the other covers move over and down. So right now, there are only four covers in the final row. Four covers and two spaces. I want to see that row filled, so I can hardly wait to get the next two stories (and covers) up. In the meantime, seeing them all up there motivates me to write more stories and design more covers. It's a vicious, wonderful cycle.

All of that got me thinking about Smashwords. I published my first three e-published works on Smashwords on February 24, 2011. Today I have 141 published works there. During the first several months most of the publications were nonfiction works on writing and poetry collections. Today, most of them are short stories, short story collections and novels. One hundred and forty-one published works. Whew. But I still get a little thrill every time I publish something new. That's the power of streaks.

All of this probably seems overwhelming if you're just starting out, but that's another thing that's beautiful about The Streak. You create it one story, one book, one cover at a time. As I mentioned the other day, you don't have to write fifty-two short stories in a year. Just write one story. When the new week rolls around, write another one. When the next new week rolls around, write another one. One at a time.

I'm hoping this blog will be another streak. I intend to post here every day, period. Most days will have a cumulative word count and a Topic of the Night. Every now and then I won't write anything so there won't be a word count. Every now and then I won't have a Topic of the Night. If that ever happens at the same time, well, then the streak's broken. If that happens, I'll start a new streak the next day. Both print and ebook formats will be released on Monday, May 25.

But I'm not planning to break the streak. Even on days when I have no Internet access, like when I'm camping or something, I can post a pre-written Topic of the Night. (grin)

Okay, it's been a pretty good day. Very glad I chose to stay with this sequel after I finished the second prequel. The writing is really flowing. If any of you have been following the Wes Crowley books, the latest, Comanche Fire (prequel 2), is available now for preorder on Smashwords and Amazon as an ebook.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4064

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)

Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595

Total fiction words for the month..... 47,885
Total fiction words for the year..... 305,340

May 20, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 3 this morning. Almost felt like a slacker. Checked and responded to email stuff first.

Thanks to Mike Rom for announcing this blog in the next issue of the SSA's newsletter, The Write Word. To check out the SSA (Society of Southwestern Authors) visit **http://ssa-az.org/**.

Topic of the Night: Snags

Initially I wrote "Sorry kids, no topic of the night tonight. My head just isn't working in a nonfiction direction today. Most days I'll try to have a topic up here for you, but every now and then I won't, so... well, you know."

And then I started writing what follows this sentence and just let it run. So it's short but your topic of the night is Snags.

Okay, it's been a pretty good day today, though not as good as I'd have liked. I didn't quite make my daily goal although, of course, this is a game of averages. Still.... I do suspect tomorrow will be a lot better. There's kind of a snag in the storyline. Now, the characters led me to it, so it's part of the process. Nothing to get all flustered about.

Thing is, the only thing I've found to do with a snag is give it to my subconscious. So I'm gonna go to bed tonight with the snag in mind, accompanied by the thought that I would sure like to see a solution to it first thing in the (very early) morning.

Then tomorrow I'll wake up, come back in here and continue writing, with the snag solved.

Why do I believe that will work? 'Cause I'm a moron?

No.

I believe it will work because my subconscious is writing this story. That's what happens when you're writing off into the dark.

My subconscious, which is kind'a like a two year old on speed, is telling the story. So since HE'S telling the

story, when HE hits a snag and comes cryin' to me, I tell him like I used to tell my children when they came to me for an easy answer: Figure It Out.

So we'll see.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2661

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595
Day 17... 2661 words. Total words to date..... 38256

Total fiction words for the month..... 50,546
Total fiction words for the year..... 308,001

May 21, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little after 3 this morning again. Checked and responded to email stuff first.

Topic of the Night: The Power of Schedule

I've been at this almost-daily writing since mid-October of last year. Or another way to look at it, I've ONLY been at this since mid-October of last year. Either way, I've only recently realized the importance of Schedule.

I've read other blogs on this topic and they made perfect sense. Like **The Importance of Routines** by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. I didn't skip over them. I read them, absorbed what was useful to me to absorb, and moved on.

But again, only recently has it all come together for me. I'm gonna tell you how.

Now first, let me disarm the detractors. The first thing most younger (in experience) writers toss out at me is my own odd schedule. When I mention practically anything about writing to them, they say some version of "Oh, but you start at 3 in the morning. I could never do that."

My first response is a shrug and "Okay." And the second is "So?"

The point is, we all have 24 hours in a day. It's up to each of us to determine how we use that 24 hours. I use about 6 hours of it sleeping. Whether that 6 hours comes out of the middle of the night or the middle

of the day, it's still only 6 hours and it still leaves 18 hours during which I can do all the other things I want to do.

Awhile back I realized when I was a child there were only three channels on TV yet there was ALWAYS something good on to watch. Pretty much every day in every time slot we had to decide which show to watch and which to pass up, and it was seldom an easy decision.

Today we have hundreds of channels, yet there are only a smattering of programs that are well written or well acted enough to even attract my attention. In fact, only one show keeps me riveted day after day, and it's a re-run of the old NYPD Blue series. Excellent acting, excellent writing, great camera work. It's a free course on writing, short story, novel and screen.

It begins every weekday (here in Arizona) at 4 p.m. on Audience. (Here that's Channel 239 on DirecTV.) So that's the top end of my schedule. Only one time in the past few months did I continue writing when 4 p.m. rolled around on a weekday, and that worked out all right because Audience shows all five episodes from each week on the Sunday following that week. Five episodes in a row. No commercials. I'm in heaven, and yes, I take notes when I'm watching it. As I said, it's a free course on writing.

The beginning of my schedule is about an hour after I wake up and climb outta the rack. The first hour is coffee, emails, other people's blog posts and sometimes some nonfiction ebook I've bought and downloaded. Sometimes I use part of that first hour to write the topic of the night, as I'm doing this morning.

So in my schedule, I have roughly 12 to 14 hours available to me to write, from 3 or 4 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. Now, my "job" is to carve three to four hours out of that time to actually commit words to the page. That's 3,000 to 4,000 words or thereabouts.

And I find (here's the power part) if I can get the first 2,000 words or so committed to the page before I go walking (so that's two to three normal to short writing sessions) I'll make my daily goal of 3,000 words for that day. If I don't, there's almost no chance.

I'm not sure why. I still have plenty of time. There's just something about coming back from my walk and knowing I have only another say 500 to 1200 words to go that invigorates me. And then, often as not, I shoot right past the goal.

But again, it has nothing to do with the "odd" hours I keep. I still sleep only 6 hours per day and have available the other 18 hours. I just adjusted my sleep/wake time to suit what I consider to be important for me. I go to bed earlier so I miss a lot of stuff that, if I were awake, I'd stare at like a zombie. I wake earlier when the world is quieter and more conducive (for me) to writing.

I don't recommend it for anyone else. We have different lives, you and I, and we prioritize differently. That's all right.

But what I DO recommend is that, if you want to write (or write more) you set a goal and then adjust your schedule around that goal to better enhance the chance that you will attain it.
That's what I'm gonna go do right now.

Weird how things work out. I wrote above about the power of schedules and today I got off mine completely. I DIDN'T get my words flowing early like I usually do, and I DID end up writing through my favorite program, which I usually don't do.

Crazy day today, including paying off a car loan (yay) and some other running around I hadn't planned on. Really ate into the writing time. So today, I wrote late. As I said, I wrote through my usual NYPD Blue time, but I'm glad. Here's why.

Remember awhile back I wrote about **Persistence**? Well, thanks to persistence, I finished a scene today that will enable me to flow directly into another scene in the morning. It's SO good when it's moving like this. But sometimes you gotta call up that persistence thing just to show the subconscious who's boss.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3293

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595
Day 17... 2661 words. Total words to date..... 38256
Day 18... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 41549

Total fiction words for the month..... 53,839
Total fiction words for the year..... 311,294

May 22, 2015[edit]

Rolled out a little before 1 a.m. this morning at the urging of my little cat. She asks very little of me, so it's difficult to deny her the few things she wants. She and I commuted the forty feet or so to my office by way of the coffee pot. There I checked and responded to email as she curled up for a nap.

Topic of the Night: Feeding the Kitty

This morning I did something I very seldom do. I checked stats. The tiny following on this list has been growing (Thanks!) but very slowly. So for today's topic I have a request and some across the board advice.

If you follow or attend a blog you like or one that you find useful, either of mine (this one or HarveyStanbrough.com) or others, help it grow. The two big ways to do that are

1. Pass the word to all your writer friends, writing groups, and so on, and
2. If you have a website or blog of your own, consider referring other people to my blog (or others you like). As you will see, I pretty regularly link to Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and other resources that I find useful. Also, if you visit my main website at HarveyStanbrough.com, you will find a long list of valuable writers' resources. Some of those are blogs as well.
3. When a particular post speaks to you, leave a comment.

That last one might be the most important of the three. Comments are a nice way to let the writer of the blog know he isn't talking into a void. But much more importantly, they help 'bots and other Internet and World Wide Web creepy crawlies "find" blogs. The more comments appear on a blog (and the more

regularly comments appear) the earlier the blog appears in search engine ratings.

So I'm just sayin', not only for my blog(s) but for any that you find useful, take a moment to leave a comment when you can.

And thanks for your support, whether it's through comments or sharing my blog posts with others or dropping a tip in Harvey's Tip Jar. Hey, I appreciate it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3104

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595
Day 17... 2661 words. Total words to date..... 38256
Day 18... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 41549
Day 19... 3104 words. Total words to date..... 44653

Total fiction words for the month..... 56,943
Total fiction words for the year..... 314,398

May 23, 2015[edit]

Rolled out way late at almost 3:30. I really prefer 2. I like to be writing by around 3.

Topic of the Night: Process

This is kind of like schedule or routine, but more focused. When I say process here, I'm talking about the process of writing a particular work.

This topic came up because I'm in or nearing the end game of my current novel. Now I'm just writing off into the dark so I don't know yet what the end will be. It might occur in the next few thousand words or it might take another ten or even fifteen thousand, but I know it's not far off.

And near the end, I'll run a little low on petrol. And patience. If you lived here and remained within hearing, during the last few days of me writing a novel you'd hear me turn into a three year old. "Aaauuuggghhh! I don't WANNA finish this stupid book! This is so HARD! I gotta take a day off!"

In the alternative, it will be something like, "No possible WAY am I gonna make my goal today." (That was yesterday. I was saying that all day at about half-hour intervals, and when I finally stopped, I had made

my goal plus some.)

Or it will be something like “Well, I only was able to dribble out a thousand words today, but I’ll take it. I guess.” (This is what I was expecting to write today. Ha!)

I swear, it’s just like listening to a grouchy three year old. And it’s worse in here where I am, because I can hear it too and I’m the one who could turn it off.

But I can’t. I can’t turn it off. I can only let it work through itself.

What keeps me sane, relatively speaking of course, is that I recognize all the whining as part of the process I’ll go through in finishing this novel. It’s the same process I went through in finishing the first six novels and the novella, and I know, right now, it’s the same process I’ll go through in writing and finishing the next novel.

But knowing it isn’t the same as experiencing it. Like physical pain, it isn’t something we can recall into existence. If it were, I probably wouldn’t be a writer in exactly the same way that no mother I know would have another child.

Because I can’t stand it. Seriously. It’s the sort of nasal, wimpy, whiny stuff that makes me wanna slap both hands over my ears and run in a circle yelling “Lalalalalalala!” so I can’t hear it.

It’s the shrill sort of thing that makes me wanna grab a rifle and hit a tower and shoot the unruly hell out of anyone who wrinkles up their nose and says, “Who thinks like that?”

Seriously. ‘Cause I do, okay? I think like that.

And I whine like that when I’m nearing the end game of writing a novel and I hate it. Ugh.

So one day if this blog just stops coming, you should feel relatively confident that I’ve finally snapped. You may be sure I am sitting naked on a beach in Ecuador counting grains of sand and angry because I lost count at nine hundred and sixty-eight trillion, seven hundred and fifty-three billion, four hundred and twelve million, seven thousand twenty-six because THAT ONE grain of sand just couldn’t keep its stupid hands to itself. No. It just HAD to jump in line ahead of the next grain of sand, which caused me to count it twice, I think.

Which of course means I have to start all over again.

Okay, so what’s your process?

REALLY didn’t think I’d reach my goal today (see above). Actually, honestly, I didn’t think I’d get a thousand words on the page. I just kept coming back to the keyboard and it all worked out. Not sure at all yet where or how this one is gonna end, but MAN is it taking some interesting twists!

Today’s Writing
Fiction words: 3328

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)

Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595
Day 17... 2661 words. Total words to date..... 38256
Day 18... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 41549
Day 19... 3104 words. Total words to date..... 44653
Day 20... 3328 words. Total words to date..... 47981

Total fiction words for the month..... 60,271
Total fiction words for the year..... 317,726

May 24, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 2:30. That'll work. Checked and answered emails, did some blog reading. Not much out there right now.

Topic of the Night: Distractions

Happen. They do. Sometimes there's nothing you can do about them.

But if you're a mechanic and you get a phone call (distraction) and your spouse or significant other shows up unannounced for lunch (distraction) or a chunk of spy satellite falls out of the sky and flattens the dry cleaner across the street (distraction), you look, you take care of it, and you go back to work on the engine or the transmission or whatever.

Or you can use the distraction as an excuse to take a day off. Doesn't matter to me. I'm not making a judgement here. But I'm just sayin', it's your choice, not something that's forced on you.

If you're a writer, same thing. Distractions will happen. You can either say "Oh darn. Guess I won't be able to write today. Maybe I'll start tomorrow" or you can take a look or a listen, deal with the distractions, then go back to work on the story or novel or whatever.

Today I had distractions. It's end game on the novel (see yesterday's post). I'm all geared up to use whatever excuses happen to offer themselves to me. I didn't think I'd put a thousand words on the page today (like the past few days). Yet I surpassed my goal.

How?

Distractions happened.

I gave them the attention they deserved.

Then I went back to work.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 3124

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
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Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
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Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595
Day 17... 2661 words. Total words to date..... 38256
Day 18... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 41549
Day 19... 3104 words. Total words to date..... 44653
Day 20... 3328 words. Total words to date..... 47981
Day 22... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 51105

Total fiction words for the month..... 63,341
Total fiction words for the year..... 320,850

May 25, 2015[edit]

Woke up at 1:30 and rolled out right at 2. Problem is, I went to bed last night at 10. Ugh. Emails, COFFEE, and to work.

Topic of the Night: Quieting the Critical Mind

Okay, I started writing on my current novel. I'm really looking forward to being finished with this one. The end is coming soon, and I'm anxious to see what I'm going to write next. But I received a question via email and it became this topic of the night, so I took the next hour and a half responding and researching and writing this blog post.

I've talked before about writing off into the dark. In fact, this whole blog is based on that method of writing, piggybacked on the writer's determination to follow Heinlein's Rules. I even teach an **Audio Course on Writing Off Into the Dark**.

But one subtopic is sorely lacking any direct instruction that I can find, even my own. Possibly because it's a highly personal problem that must be solved by each writer for himself or herself: How to Quiet the Conscious, Critical Mind.

I could tell you how *I* do it, but that might or might not work for you. At least sometimes I tell my critical, conscious mind (yes, aloud) to get away from me, leave me alone, go sit in that corner over there until I'm finished writing.

And once you've sent your grownup, responsible, control-freak conscious mind packing? Be a two year old, for goodness' sake! Just tell a story! Run and play and enjoy yourself!

Now, writing off into the dark merely means writing without an outline. But a big part of that (and the reason practitioners don't use an outline) is learning to trust your subconscious. Learning to let go and turn off your English teacher's voice in your head.

I call it the Golden Bradbury Rule, and I'm paraphrasing: If you don't surprise yourself, how can you possibly hope to surprise the reader?

A correspondent emailed to ask how to shut off the critical voice. I suppose I could have just said something like, "The same way you did before" (grin) but I didn't want to be flip.

The thing is, I don't think I've ever heard any direct instruction regarding HOW to turn off critical voice, but there are a lot of hints at how to do so in all the other advice. Here are some of those hints:

- Just let go of control and trust your subconscious. Don't consciously construct sentences etc. You know how to do that without thinking about it, so Just Write.
- Don't "direct" your characters as the almighty writer on high. Get down in the trenches and run through the story with them. Be the recorder. Describe the setting(s) they're running through and write down what they say and do.
- Don't think. Just write. Again, if you don't surprise yourself as a writer, how can you hope to surprise the reader?

When he was asked how he wrote *Dandelion Wine*, Bradbury responded that he wrote it the same way he wrote pretty much all of his stories and novels. He sat down at the keyboard, put his fingers on the keys, and just wrote whatever came.

And that is perhaps the best advice on how to quiet the critical mind. Put your fingers on the keyboard and just write what comes. When you get stuck, just write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence.

Now, how do YOU relinquish control and just enjoy the story as you're writing it? How do YOU quiet your critical mind?

By the way, I highly recommend reading **This Post About John Nash** (Beautiful Mind) by Maurice Ewing. I'm not exaggerating when I say it's nothing short of incredible. There is so much information in there to mine for writing that I actually copied and pasted the whole post to read again a few times.

Remember I mentioned distractions yesterday or day before? Today, Microsoft Word 2003 (on my writing 'puter) crashed. It failed to save what I'd written. None of the controls would work. I was only about 1300 words in, so I finally opened a Notepad document, split the 12″ screen half and half, and copied, verbatim, through my fingers, every word I'd written in the story that hadn't saved.

Then I saved the new words to a flash drive and added them to the story later. (Of course, I did NOT count those re-typed words in my fiction count below.)

Then I went to eBay and ordered a new writing 'puter. This one has a 14″ screen. It will be here by Friday or so. I'm not angry or upset at the used little 'puter that I will now sell on eBay, the one that crashed on me this morning. Over the past several months, since April 15, 2014, I've put 558,267 words of published fiction through that little 'puter. I think it has served its purpose.

For those who are counting, that's 234,297 words from April 15 through December 31, 2014 plus 323,970 words from January 1 through May 25, 2015.

Through that little computer, I've shoved 66 short stories, 7 novels (including the current WIP, which I

will finish tomorrow or the next day) and 1 novella. So I'm not complaining. I think it cost me maybe $120, and it's been a great friend. Here's hoping the next one ($150) will do as well.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3120

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
Day 6..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 16267 (3/17)
Day 7..... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 19536 (3/24)
Day 8..... 1910 words. Total words to date..... 21446 (3/25)
Day 9..... 1003 words. Total words to date..... 19518 (adjusted) (4/2)
Day 10... 1236 words. Total words to date..... 20754 (Long layoff. This was 5/5)
Day 11... 1861 words. Total words to date..... 22615 (This was 5/14)
Day 12... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 25839
Day 13... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 26891
Day 14... 1372 words. Total words to date..... 28263
Day 15... 3268 words. Total words to date..... 31531
Day 16... 4064 words. Total words to date..... 35595
Day 17... 2661 words. Total words to date..... 38256
Day 18... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 41549
Day 19... 3104 words. Total words to date..... 44653
Day 20... 3328 words. Total words to date..... 47981
Day 21... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 51105
Day 22... 3120 words. Total words to date..... 54225

Total fiction words for the month..... 66,461
Total fiction words for the year..... 323,970

May 26, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Checked email, read blogs, etc. (See below.)

Topic of the Night: Nada. El Zippo. Nothin'. Another guy's blog.

Sorry. I don't mean to be flip.

I kind of expect to finish my current novel today, so I'm a little hyper, meaning I can't calm myself enough to write even borderline insane nonfiction right now.

So for tonight, I'm going to point you to Dean Wesley Smith's topic of the night, **Books Not Selling** (when you get there, scroll down). Go, read it. Seriously. This is something every writer should know, early and often.

I spent the first hour as usual doing various things to wake myself up. After that, I turned to my writing 'puter, opened it, and remembered my new writing 'puter will be here in a matter of days.

So I need to get this one prepped for eBay. So I cleaned it up a bit, took pics of everything from every angle, wrote a pretty good blurb, and stuck it all in a folder. So good to go on that front.

By the way, if any of you would like this 'puter, let me know. I figured out (after I had ordered the 14″) what was wrong. Word 2003 crashed because I'd left it open too long, like for days on end. It accumulated too much something and stopped working right. It's okay again now. But I've already ordered the other one and it's time to move on, so I'm selling this one. Here's what's different about it.

It has 4 GB of RAM, a 111 GB hard drive, and an HP Ultra-Capacity Battery that keeps it working for about 8 hours. (Most TC4400s have an 80GB hard drive and 1 or 2GBs of RAM or less. The additional RAM makes it operate faster.) The additional memory and battery alone are worth $100, and I'm selling the thing for $175. So if you need a good writing 'puter, let me know.

Okay. I just finished the novel. I'm ecstatic. Not because anything is over, but because now I can begin something new. Over the next day or two I'm probably going to put together a couple of collections for Stringer (one ten-story and one five-story) and I'll also be starting the next novel. Not sure how the word count will go for the rest of this month, but I'm pretty happy clearing 70,000 words so not too worried about it. Breathing room. Gotta love feeling you have some breathing room. (grin)

A process note — In the past when I was writing, if the story took a wrong turn and I cut it later, etc. I would simply put up an adjusted total. Beginning with this novel, I'm trying a different approach. The total below is how many new words I wrote in creating this novel. However, when I wrote something that "felt" wrong, I copy/pasted it to the end of the document. Some of those ended up back in the novel, but some didn't. I'll cut those that didn't now, after the fact. In this case that will be about 1800 words.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3631

Writing of The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley sequel)
Day 1..... 4171 words. Total words to date..... 4171 (This was March 9)
Day 2..... 3452 words. Total words to date..... 7623 (3/10)
Day 3..... 1810 words. Total words to date..... 9433 (3/14)
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12410 (3/15)
Day 5..... 2387 words. Total words to date..... 13897 (3/16)
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Day 18... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 41549
Day 19... 3104 words. Total words to date..... 44653
Day 20... 3328 words. Total words to date..... 47981
Day 21... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 51105
Day 22... 3120 words. Total words to date..... 54225
Day 23... 3631 words. Total words to date..... 57856 (done) (... adjusted total, 56,031)

Total fiction words for the month..... 70,092
Total fiction words for the year..... 327,601

May 27, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Checked email, read blogs, etc.

Topic of the Night: The Reach of Short Fiction

I hope to do some writing later today, but I started out this morning with a planned day off from writing. Instead I'm putting together two collections. The ten-story collection (Strainge Stern Stuff) will include the stories that are in Strainge Times and Stern Stuff. The five-story collection will include five more uncollected Stringer stories.

When the ten-story collection is published later today, I'll have three separate streams of revenue from each story in the collection: one stream from the individual story, one stream from the story in the short collection (five stories) and one stream from the same story in the longer collection (ten stories).

This is all about price points. Most of my individual short stories cost $2.99, so five individual stories would cost just under $15. Or the reader can buy a five-story collection for $4.99, a savings of $10. Or the reader can buy a ten-story collection for $6.99, a savings of $23 over buying the same ten stories individually.

That's why I publish individual short stories. To drive sales of collections.

That's also why I publish short collections and longer collections, to drive sales of longer collections. The more of your work they read, the more they'll like it.

And I publish short stories that are adapted or otherwise connected to my novels to drive sales of the novels.
I constantly see writers, when they finish something, stop writing and go into "marketing" mode. If you have a master's degree in marketing and a well-developed strategy, I suppose that's all right. But the number one thing we plebes can do to market our stories and novels is Write More Stories and Novels.

Case in point, recently a respondent (who is also a writer) read my latest short story "Coralín." She said the writing was very fluid, etc. and she enjoyed the story a great deal. In response I thanked her, and told her the story was excerpted and adapted from my most recent novel, The Marshal of Agua Perlado. She asked for the name of the first novel in the saga. She wants to read them all. (yay)

Now, short stories are not everyone's bag. I get that. But if you write short fiction, consider collecting them in five- and ten-story collections to help drive sales of your other stuff. If you need more incentive, just think of how much fun it is to write them. (grin)

Okay. To write ANY story opening, you need a character with a problem in a setting. Then you just put your fingers on the keyboard and write what comes. That's it. That's absolutely all there is to it.

I saw Thomas Mercer, a preacher in old west times, staggering along the side of a sort-of road holding his right hand over a gash in his abdomen. That's all. That was at 1:40. It's 4:28 right now. You'll see the results next Monday if you're subscribed to my short story site. (grin) Or I'll send it to you early if you want it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3066

Writing of "The Unfortunate Case of Thomas Mercer" (short story of the week for 6/1)
Day 1..... 3066 words. Total words to date..... 3066

Total fiction words for the month..... 73,158

Total fiction words for the year..... 330,667

May 28, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3. Checked email, read blogs, etc. From that experience, a caution.

Topic of the Night: Learn, But Be Careful Out There

This is an important blog post. I'm posting it here, but I will also post it over on HarveyStanbrough.com soon.

As you know, I advocate that writers never stop learning. The best way to learn (once you have a good working knowledge of grammar, punctuation, etc.) is to read for pleasure. Then, when you read a passage or a story or a scene that absolutely floors you, GO BACK after you've finished reading for pleasure and read it again, this time with an eye to HOW the writer did what he or she did to knock your socks off. Study. You'll get it.

When you enjoy a particular writer's style—the way the story flows or the rhythms or the unique word choice, for example—I even advocate writing the passage or scene or story again yourself, word for word, NOT to publish, but just to experience that flow or those rhythms.

I've gone so far as to write an alternate ending for a novel of one very famous writer to see how closely I could keep to her style. Others to whom I showed the work couldn't tell a difference. Writing parodies or take-offs is another excellent way to study.

Now, will such exercises supplant your own personal style? Absolutely not. But they will inform it. They will help you grow as a writer, help your writing improve.

And best of all, you won't have to THINK about it consciously. What you need will have seeped into your subconscious as you did the exercises, and it will flow out of your fingers into the keyboard as you write.

One of my personal favorite writers is James Lee Burke. The first book I read of his (a few months ago) was *In the Electric Mist with Confederate Dead*. I intend to read everything he's written before it's all over.

Another of my favorites is whoever wrote the screenplay(s) for *The Godfather* series. Another is whoever wrote the screenplay(s) for the *Lonesome Dove* series. And for the film *Tombstone* (with Val Kilmer). And pretty much every episode of *NYPD Blue*.

Okay, so learning is good. We probably agree on that. And improving is even better. So what's the beef? What's that "But Be Careful Out There" part all about?

I know dozens, maybe hundreds, of writers and would-be writers who listen to and absorb at face value pretty much anything anyone says or writes about the craft of writing. That goes double if they're listening to or reading something from a successful writer.

STOP IT.

Now it would take a whole other blog post to talk about false instructors, people who apparently get some perverse pleasure from teaching something they know absolutely nothing about. On that particular subtopic, I'll just say this: If they say something that sounds ridiculous (like "get rid of all instances of 'had' from your work" or "I can't explain xxxxxxxxx but I know it when I see it"), stop listening immediately. Seriously. They don't know what the hell they're talking about and I'd be more than happy to

debate it with them. I DESPISE false instructors for all the harm they do.

But in this post, I want to talk about writers who are successful under pretty much any definition of success: they've hit bestseller lists, they've made a ton of money, they've achieved prestigious award nominations, they've sold tons of copies, etc. Any or all of the above.

Doesn't that mean everything they say is gold?

No. Absolutely not. They are human.

Humans have quirks and prejudices, and no human being knows everything about any topic.

Also, no human being knows the intentions of other human beings. Period. People who pretend they do get my ire up in a hurry.

Please, when you're listening to or reading advice for your writing, be skeptical. If you've attended my own writing conferences over the years, you've heard me say you should Question Everything, even from me. You'll never catch me at a loss, because if I don't know it, I don't teach it.

Questioning costs you nothing and it helps you learn. And if the instructor (famous writer, etc.) becomes defensive or angry when you question what he says, listen to his future musings with an even larger grain of salt.

Let me give you an example of a usually great source of information who sometimes completely blows it. This guy has touched all the success markers I listed above. He's written bestsellers. He's sold millions of copies of his books worldwide and he's made good money (I assume) doing it. He's also been in the business as a writer for over 30 years. Good credentials, yes? But he's also human, with all that entails.

Dean Wesley Smith is my own unintentional mentor. He and I are about the same age, and we've both lived very active, physical lives albeit in different ways. We've both endured severe physical trauma (though again of different types) and come out the other side. And we speak at least the same family of languages, those that arose during the '50s and '60s and '70s.

I have learned a great deal listening to Dean and reading what he's written. I've learned more about writing in the past year, mostly from Dean, than I learned over the previous 60+ years combined, and I will be forever grateful to him for that, above and beyond all the money I've paid for his online workshops and video lectures.

But again, he's human.

The fact is, sometimes Dean throws a broad blanket of degradation over anything he doesn't understand or doesn't like. He tends to generalize, and for me that's a massive red flag. Generalizations indicate ignorance. Not stupidity, but a lack of knowledge or a lack of desire to gain knowledge. Just for a few examples, in the recent past, he's written that

- Nobody who edits can possibly be a good writer. (There is no possible way he can know that.)
- All book doctors and freelance editors are scam artists. (Some of them are, but certainly not all. I suspect he had a bad experience with a bad freelance editor in the past.)
- The only legitimate editors work for New York publishing houses. (Doesn't WMG publishing, Dean's own house, have a "legitimate" editor?)
- Never have your work edited by anyone who hasn't written at least [select any number over 50] novels (Huh? I thought editors can't be writers.)
- Nobody who started writing in this century can possibly be a polished ("Stage Four") writer. (I

started writing way back in the previous century but I don't buy this for a second. The fact is, different people have different talents, different strengths and weaknesses.)

And the list goes on.

These generalizations—LIKE ALL GENERALIZATIONS—are myths, and they're absolutely as bad as the generalization Dean himself despises, that "If a writer writes fast, he can't possibly write well."

For one thing, claiming to know someone else's intent (all book doctors and freelance editors are scam artists) is a massive dose of bovine excrement. That's no less silly than claiming to know how well someone writes when you haven't read so much as a paragraph of that writer's work.

And about those "legitimate" editors in New York houses… really? The twenty-something straight out of college who is working for a New York house is a "legitimate" editor whereas people who have a gift for the nuances of the language and a thorough knowledge of all the rules of grammar and punctuation are not?

Now, had Dean written that

- SOME people who are great editors can't write fiction well, or
- SOME book doctors and freelance editors are scam artists, or
- writers who don't practice the craft PROBABLY won't become polished, really good writers, well then

I would agree.

You get the point.

But what bothers me most about this is that, judging from the comments on his posts, a LOT of young writers (in experience, not necessarily age) are ingesting whole everything he says.

So I'm just sayin', don't be one of those. Develop a healthy level of skepticism.

I'm not saying don't respect the guy (or whomever) for his or her accomplishments and knowledge. I'm just sayin', don't buy wholesale everything someone says just because they purport to know. For one thing, the main thing ANY successful, long-term writer knows is what works for him or her.

Certainly you should continue to learn from those with experience, especially those whose work you admire. When you hear or read something that makes sense to you, use it.

But when it doesn't make sense to you, ask for clarification. And if when you ask, the source becomes defensive, then I recommend 1) disbelieving what he said and 2) listening to anything in the future from that source with even more skepticism.

And the same thing goes for generalizations.

Okay, today I decided to start keeping track of my nonfiction writing as well. You'll see that reflected under Today's Writing below and at the end. I looked back at the year and tallied the word count, minus the parts that repeat (word counts on books as I wrote them, etc.). The nonfiction count to this point is approximate and a little low. From this point forward it will be accurate.

Also today I listed a couple of computers for sale on eBay: the little 12″ writing 'puter and a massive, HP g7 with a 17.3″ monitor that I've had around for awhile. Frankly, it was in top of a closet and I'd forgotten

about it. And other than clearing out those computers, taking pics of them and getting them listed, I did very little.

I did think about my next novel, put together a prep document for it (just character names and places that are flowing over, etc.) so I'd have it for ready reference, and tomorrow morning I will begin Book 3 (the third and probably final prequel) in the Wes Crowley saga. (el grinno di mucho)

After I finish that one, I intend to dive right back into the saga with the second sequel, so that will be Book 8. Woohoo!

Know what feels really great? The confidence that Book 3 will be published and on the shelves for sale by the end of June. How cool is that? And I'm betting Book 8 will be published and on the shelves for sale by July 25. I'll tell you more about the significance of that date later. (grin)

Today's Writing
Nonfiction words: 1774
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 3 of the Wes Crowley saga (prequel 3)
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 73,158
Total fiction words for the year..... 330,667

Total nonfiction words for the month..... 19,840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 49,611

May 29, 2015[edit]

Well, up since midnight-thirty. Ugh. Oh well. Another day, another dollar and eighty-two cents. Checked email, read blogs, etc.

Topic of the Night: Challenging Yourself

Yeah, I'm back on that again. The fact is, folks, thinking about writing is not writing. Planning and plotting and outlining (is an insane waste of time and) is not writing. Researching, although necessary sometimes, is not writing.

Only writing is writing.

One of the best ways I know to get yourself to the keyboard is to set a challenge or a goal (same thing).

And make it a recurring goal or challenge so that if you fail, you will fail to success. If you have a set number of words per day (mine is 3,000) and you miss it by 200, you "failed" your goal, but so what? You're still 2,800 words deeper into your WIP and your goal resets tomorrow morning. (grin)

So c'mon. All you need is a character with a problem in a setting. You can think of that right now. That's the easy part. The trick is to sit down at the keyboard (or with your yellow legal pad on your lap, pen in hand) and start writing.

In addition to my daily recurring goal of 3,000 publishable words of fiction per day and my weekly recurring goal of at least one new short story per week, I'm setting myself another goal, a challenge.

Yesterday I wrote that what feels really great is knowing that Book 3 will be published and on the shelves for sale by the end of June. I also wrote that I'm betting Book 8 will be published and on the shelves for sale by July 25.

On July 25, I'm supposed to leave (driving) on a trip to Indiana to see two of my sons, their wives, the grandbabies, etc. It should be a great time. For one thing, I love road trips, though I take longer at them now than I used to.

I'll be driving, and I push the speed limit. (Yeah, I'm the guy laying on the horn when I come up behind you on a two-lane road and you're doing 35 in a 50.) But if I see something interesting, I'm gonna stop. No more of that nonsensical "drive straight through" stuff I did when I was young and stupid. Now I'm old and obnoxious, and I'm determined to enjoy it.

I also enjoy challenging myself, so I'm challenging myself to have both Book 3 and Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga finished by the time I leave for Indiana. I'll start writing the first one today when I finish piddling with this blog post.

Then while I'm in Indiana, I'll begin Book 9. I'm now anticipating there will be ten books in the saga. (I was calling it a series, but really it's one story straight through.)

Really, this isn't all that much of a challenge. I think the longest time I took to write a novel in this set was 23 days, and there are 56 days (inclusive) from now to July 24. So that gives me 10 days of breathing room. Ought'a be a piece of cake. (grin)

So I guess I'll get to it.

GREAT day of writing! I decided to pack up my little writing 'puter. After finished *The Marshal of Agua Perlado* on it and then the short story of the week, I decided that was enough. I knew my new writing 'puter would be here today, so I packed up the little one last night.

This morning after writing most of this post, I started Book 3, which I've decided to call *Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger* (since he comes into his own as a Ranger in this one). So I hammered out the opening awkwardly on my business computer (it's too high, wrong angle, etc. for extended writing) but managed over 2400 words before we checked the mail and saw that my new writing 'puter had arrived.

Natch, I spent some time playing with the new one, setting up Word the way I want it all over again (groan), etc. Then I went back, very happily, to playing with Wes and the guys as they run through this storyline. And I LOVE writing off into the dark. About 500 words into the opening of this novel, Wes said and did something that threw me completely for a loop. I didn't see it coming at all, until it came dribbling out through my fingertips. Absolutely incredible.

I wish all of you the joy I find in writing off into the dark.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4019
Nonfiction words: 767

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019

Total fiction words for the month..... 77,177
Total fiction words for the year..... 334,686

Total nonfiction words for the month..... 20,607
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 50,378

May 30, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 3 and checked email. Didn't check DWS blog until this afternoon. There's something going on with him, I suspect. (I don't know.) His blog posts don't have the same body they used to have, the same weight.

Topic of the Night: Writing in Series vs. Saga

Just some musings on the topic.

You all know how I write. I just sit down at the computer, put my fingers on the keyboard, and type what comes. It's wonderful. (Don't take my word for it. Try it. It really works, and it works well.)

Often when I mention to anyone that I've written several novels, one of the first things they ask is, "But they're in a series, aren't they? Same characters and all that?" For some reason they think that makes the writing easier.

If they were an actual series, yes, I suspect that would make the writing easier. But mine aren't in a series. Mine are a saga, one long chronological story, and different characters come and go in different books. It doesn't make the writing easier. It makes it more difficult.

When I'm writing a character that moves from book to book or when a character comes back into Book Three after I haven't heard from him since Book One, it slows me down. Same goes for places: towns, named draws, locations on creeks, etc. If I've already written it, when I write about it again I have to slow down and be sure I'm not being inconsistent. Ugh.

In a series, perhaps you have a recurring main character or group of main characters. Those characters deal with different situations in different books. They can be read in any sequence and they'll still make sense because (most of the time) the chronology doesn't matter.

Some excellent examples of series are the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew mysteries, or the Mike Hammer books or any of the "traveling angel" television shows (Touched by an Angel, Quantum Leap, NYPD Blue, etc.). My friends Dan Baldwin, Alison Holt and Larry Long all have novels in series. Dawn, do you have novels in series as well? (Dan also has a saga, so he knows what I mean about timelines, etc. Poor Dan.)

But again, mine's a saga. It has a chronology and it's about one person or group of people.

I wrote the Wes Crowley books out of order. I wrote Books 3, 4, and 5 first. Then Wes told me he wanted folks to see him and Mac before they joined the Rangers and their early years. Okay, so out came the first and second prequels (Books 1 & 2). Fortunately, I'm almost finished with that nonsense. The third prequel (Book 3) should be out in mid to late June. But when they're all laying on the table in front of you there's a chronology to them. You CAN read them out of order—each is a stand alone book—but they're better read from the first in the series to the last.

Looking to the future, I hope I can find a small group of main characters for whom I can write a series of books. I think that would be a blast. There wouldn't be much work to keeping the main characters in character, and all the other characters and situations would change with each book. Custom made for writing off into the dark.

Well, I didn't quite make my daily goal, but I don't mind. Tomorrow it resets, and I'm really expecting this

novel to go fairly quickly. I wouldn't be surprised if I got close to 4,000 words on most days. Just the way it feels. We'll see. Back at it in the morning.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2979
Nonfiction words: 617

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998

Total fiction words for the month..... 80,156
Total fiction words for the year..... 337,665

Total nonfiction words for the month..... 21,224
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 50,995

May 31, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2 and checked email. Wes was tugging at my arm the whole time I was sipping my first cuppa coffee. Writing by 2:30. What a great feeling.

Topic of the Night: Priorities

Every now and then I'll re-post a topic here that I think is important. This one I shared among only a small group of folks before. So here it is for its world stage debut. (grin)

Priorities

My priority is to write, period. Yes, if the house is on fire and I hit a good stopping point (*leave a jagged edge!* but only if that works for you) and the door is warm with radiant heat from flames, I'll interrupt my writing long enough to carry my writing laptop out through the window behind my desk. So in that instance, okay fine, escaping the fire would temporarily take first priority.

But only because if I didn't escape it I wouldn't be able to write more later. Seriously. Don't test me on this unless you're willing to pay my landlord replacement value for whatever damage the fire does.

I completely understand that other people have other priorities. That's fine. I'm not comparing. I'm just saying, my number one priority is my writing. My characters. My story. My creative mind and voice, acting in concert to Make Stuff Up. Why? For a lot of reasons, but mostly because I finally realized that I (like everyone else) can set my own priorities.

Here's the thing:

- I'm in my 60s. I wrote my first story when I was six, then frittered away 50+ years TELLING everyone the One Thing in my life was Writing and that I was a writer instead of, you know, actually writing. (Disclaimer—Maybe you haven't frittered away even an instant of your life. Maybe you're coming to writing only now because that's what you want. That's fine. But that's not me, and this is about me.)
- I bought into all those stupid myths for 50+ years. From a writing standpoint, I literally wasted well over 50 years. In a typical lifespan, that's somewhere in the vicinity of 2/3. And due to heart things, etc. my lifespan is not typical. That sort of thing adds impetus to the drive.
- I was stupid enough to use my talents (I was dipped in the Language River at birth, I'm sure of it)

to help Other People with their writing instead of writing my own stuff. What a freakin' moron, eh?

I think I'm a reasonably intelligent guy, yet it took me over 20 of the past 50+ years to finally realize that most people who call themselves writers DON'T EVEN WANT to learn to write. Most of them think once they know how to form the capital letter A with two long sticks and a short one and once they know how to grunt in words that are longer than one syllable, they know all they need to know.

And they believe they can learn what little they don't know by reading articles with titles like "Make Big Money At Home In Your Spare Time As A Writer!" I don't know. Maybe that's why I get a little carried away, even excited, when I stumble across a group of writers who seem to actually thirst for knowledge and love writing. (grin)

Recently, I told a new friend I have no regrets in my life other than some things I didn't try (yet). On further reflection, that isn't entirely true.

I regret not having come across Heinlein's Rules when I was six. And please don't make excuses for me. Don't hand me that crap about "but if you were six you wouldn't have grasped the significance" etc. because the simple fact is, nobody knows.

Ahh, but I prefer to believe I *would* have grasped the significance. I prefer to believe I would have grasped the significance with both hands and never let it go. And the thing is, if I'd stumbled across Heinlein's Rules when I was six, how big a writer would I possibly be today?

If I could go back and change just one thing, it would be that. I would have learned Heinlein's Rules when I was six and then ignored all the stupid nonsensical asinine inane control-freak myths the English teachers and other non-writers so pretentiously gave me via rough-edged suppository over all these years. (I used to teach English too, so don't jump on me.)

One of those English teachers, no kidding, told me a short while back that she's familiar with Heinlein's Rules and that they "may be all right for science fiction writers, but not for the rest of us." And by the way, she's written EIGHT novels over the past thirty years.

Are you kidding me? Heinlein's Rules have NOTHING to do with SF. N-O-T-H-I-N-G.

Has she had anything traditionally published? No. (I have.)

Has she found an agent? No. (I was represented by a New York agent named Cherry Weiner for two years at one point.)

And how long did it take you to write those eight novels? Thirty-two years.

Hmm… four years per novel? I guess that isn't too bad.

Folks, I wish she was looking at this page right now.

Just for her, just in case… I am currently working on my own EIGHTH novel and will finish it before the month of June is out. Probably WELL before the month of June is out. And I started on my first novel on October 19, 2014.

That's really close to ten months for eight novels. And people who read them say things like "well plotted" and "action packed" and "is this a western or a romance"? (grin)

Okay, now I personally don't care what the woman does. What gripes me is that she has a voice in a writers' group (not SSA) and she regularly advises other writers, impressionable writers. That just makes me wanna scream.

'Cause I don't want them to someday be 60 something and saying "Man, if only I'd found Heinlein's Rules back when I was 20 or 30 or 40 or 50."

The writing went pretty well today, I mean I met my goal, but I'm working with Four Crows today and he knows I'm kind'a on Wes' side so getting FC to share information with me is like taking candy from a baby if the baby weighs 450 pounds and doesn't like you. At all.

Tomorrow it'll go better, I'm sure, though I think I have to start off with a little more out of Four Crows before I get back into the other stuff.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3051
Nonfiction words: 1103

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049

Total fiction words for the month..... 83,207
Total fiction words for the year..... 340,716

Total nonfiction words for the month..... 22,275
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 52,046

June 1, 2015[edit]

Rough night. Rolled out at 12:30, started the day annoyed at the very least. Not good. At least I'll have a little more time to write I guess. Checked email. Got around to DWS post later, but it was only barely worth it. Be glad when he's back up to speed.

Topic of the Night: Bookmarks and Business Cards

Every writer I have known at one time or another had either a bunch of business cards printed up. Or book marks. Or both. Now understand, these writers were not offering services. They were offering their books.

Let me just say up front, the stupid notion that writers need to hand out book marks and business cards—ESPECIALLY to other writers (for example, at writers' conferences)—is nothing but another deeply imbedded myth. The last time I mentioned this in a post somewhere, several writers commented that they use bookmarks and business cards and They Actually Work!

Now I hasten to add, if you're in business to SERVE writers (and you aren't a cook from another planet), by all means print and disseminate business cards, flyers, etc. But if you're a novelist, just trust me, most other novelists don't read your work.

Most other novelists don't read MY work even though they're taking my instruction to heart. Go figure. (grin)

Of course, they don't have any hard numbers to show regarding books sold as a result of being handed a bookmark or business card, but ahem, er, you know, they work anyway. Sort of. Maybe.

Do business cards have a place in the writer's wallet? Sure. They're handy if some stranger happens to ask what you do and you say you're a writer. It's nice to be able to hand them a card that has your website listed and maybe your email address for further contact.

But most often, I see business cards (and don't forget bookmarks) on the writer's table at book fairs. Huh?

Now I'm not immune to this nonsense. Awhile back I was about to go to the book fair at Green Valley. For some reason, I succumbed to the notion that maybe I need a bookmark or business card or something to hand out at the book fair.

I worked on that for nearly TWO HOURS before it hit me: I have BOOKS at the book fair. Why would I want to hand out something to folks who have absolutely ZERO intention of buying a book?

Because the business card or bookmark has a magical quality that will slowly work on their mind and make them want to buy one of my books "someday"?

Nope. Sorry. Ain't gonna happen. I've been at this long enough to know, it just doesn't work that way.

A lot of looky-loos collect business cards and bookmarks. Some even do so to make you, the writer, feel better. Can you imagine? Then they toss the business cards outright, sometimes in the trash bin right outside the venue.

Of course, they might keep the bookmark and use it while they're reading someone else's book, but will it ever spur them to buy one of yours? Nope.

Think about it. If they were going to buy your book, they would have bought it while you were standing there, ready to offer a discount and sign the book for them.

So yeah, I might make up a sheet or two of business cards to hand out to interested strangers when they ask what I do.

But please, don't take my word for this. Just do some quick math. How much will it cost you (design, paper, ink, time) to print up your business cards and book marks or flyers or whatever?

Now, how much do you make per book sold?

Finally, how many books do you sell as a direct result of giving away the business cards and book marks, etc.?

Yeah, that's what I thought. (grin)

Okay, today, with massive potential on the first day of a brand new month, I basically screwed off. Didn't do much writing at all. My numbers are below, as usual. I'll be back in the morning.

Oh, one thing I did do was nix the nonfiction writing count. That was just silly. Besides, it was annoying to see my fiction count barely made my goal but then I had another 1000+ words of nonfiction. Those should'a been fiction, see? So I'm not gonna poke myself in the eye with that annoying figure anymore.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1685

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734

Total fiction words for the month..... 1,685
(*For June, I'm hoping to best my May total of 83,207*)
Total fiction words for the year..... 340,716

June 2, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2. Checked email and got a few other things done. I almost called this a non-writing day. I'm gonna play catch up on a lot of other writing-related and non-writing stuff. Some research, a little reading, a little work on my websites, and some map work.

And no, none of that counts as writing. Writing is putting new words on the page. Despite all that other, plus a necessary trip to Sierra Vista, I still plan to put some words on the page.

Topic of the Night: On Being a Prolific Writer

I've kind'a been forcing myself to find a topic of the night every night and that's just silly. After this one, when something occurs to me, I'll put it up here. If it doesn't, obviously I won't.

After all, this blog is mostly to give you a glimpse into the process of being a "prolific" writer. What a silly term that is. It plays into the myth that Writer is an elevated profession. Folks, it isn't.

If anything, most other professions I can think of are more important than Writer.

And then there's that whole thing about "The pen is mightier than the sword." Blah blah blah.

Of course, that thought was presented by a writer (Edward Bulwer-Lytton... yeah, the same one), so there might be a touch of bias there. And as a Marine Corps general once said, "Anyone who believes the pen is mightier than the sword has never encountered automatic weapons." Hey, truedat.

So shake off the notion that telling stories for a living is somehow an elevated calling. That act alone will go a long way toward making you a "prolific" writer.

So why do I keep putting it in air quotes? Well, because it's a silly term. It's almost melodramatic, and the fact is, I can't type well with one forearm slung across my forehead.

Being prolific just means having a work ethic. That's all. And to be a prolific writer, you don't need much of a work ethic at that. You just have to show up at your job for a few hours per day.

I write for about three hours (3000 words) per day. If I worked only three hour per day in any other job, I'd be considered a slacker. Yet I'm considered a prolific writer.

If you put out only 3,000 words per day only five days per week (go ahead and take weekends off), that's still 60,000 words in a 4-week month. That's a novel. And just like that, you're considered a prolific writer.

See why I say it's a silly term?

Okay, as I expected, not a lot of writing today, BUT every bit of writing you do keeps the story moving forward, and that's the whole point, isn't it? (grin) I have a feeling when this thing blows open it's gonna be 3000 and 4000 and maybe 5000 word days to the end.

Back tomorrow, putting my fingers on the keyboard, writing whatever comes. I hope it's a bunch.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1604

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338

Total fiction words for the month..... 3,289
(*For June, I'm hoping to best my May total of 83,207*)
Total fiction words for the year..... 342,320

June 3, 2015[edit]

Rolled out just before 3. Checked email and wrote a new blog post over on HarveyStanbrough.com for release on June 11. I'll play catch up today and add more posts when I'm not writing fiction.

Topic of the Night: Steven Pressfield and The War of Art

This post will be short and it isn't really about Steven Pressfield.

It's about his book, The War of Art. If you're a writer, this book should be on your desk or on your computer (ebook) or both. I have a copy on my desk. I have a copy in my Kindle. I read parts of it from time to time just to slap myself around a bit.

Even as a child playing team sports during recess, I've always been immune to "pep talks" and all such psychologic foolishness.

Then Pressfield came along with The War of Art and completely screwed up my smug notions that

1 I could not be affected by outside influences and

2 I had any idea at all what I was doing when it came to setting priorities.

The War of Art reminded me that time is a precious commodity that we should use wisely, and that means setting priorities. I don't want to "have been" a writer who no longer can "find" the time to write. The time is right there in front of me, but it vanishes a little more every second.

And don't kid yourself. YOU set your priorities. Situations and circumstances may pressure you, but the final decision is still yours. Like everything else, making writing a priority has a cost. More on that in another post.

For now, just know The War of Art is great therapy. It is hands-down the best no-excuses catalyst I've ever seen.

You can buy the ebook or paperback (or both) at Amazon or Barnes and Noble. You can also buy it in any of several editions at Black Irish Books, the publishing company Steven formed with his editor, Shawn Coyne.

If you don't know Steven Pressfield's name, you almost certainly know of his work. The Legend of Bagger Vance was his, and he's written several books about warriors and wartime situations.

For my money, though, writing The War of Art was why he was put on this earth.

Now, since I'm going on about Pressfield, you can find his website here. I subscribe, but I find I have to take a LOT of it with a very large grain of salt. Oddly, considering all the help I've gotten from The War of Art, I find a lot of what I consider very bad advice on his website. Stuff that will unnecessarily slow me down as a writer, stuff that feeds into the old myths I've finally dragged myself out of.

So caution on that.

Oof. Well, earlier I was thinking I don't want to slide into a 1600 word per day habit. Guess I won't, but for some reason (just a LOT of things going on in my mind) I didn't even get to 1600 words. Oh well. That's exactly why the daily goal (3,000 words) resets each morning. (grin) Onward and (I hope) upward.

Of course, this is kind of good in another way. Some of you were worried because you couldn't "keep up" with me, but this serves to show you I have my off days too. So do all writers. Just set your goals and reach for them. That's all you can do. Oh, and smile. A lot. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1450

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788

Total fiction words for the month..... 4,739
(For June, I'm hoping to best my May total of 83,207)
Total fiction words for the year..... 343,770

June 4, 2015[edit]

Up a little early at 1. Checked email and wrote a new blog post over on HarveyStanbrough.com for release on June 21.

Topic of the Night: Getting Stuck While Writing Off Into the Dark

Umm, yeah. It happens.

As you might have noticed, I had a great start the first three days. I had four thousand words the first day and then two days of around three thousand each. But after that my daily word count plummeted. And it apparently liked it down there, 'cause it took up residence.

Even when writing off into the dark you can get stuck. Usually (in me) it's because my conscious mind

keeps horning in, wanting to make the WIP conform to some standard. As you can see, sometimes it takes me a few days to figure out what's going on.

Because Wes and Mac were just starting out with the Rangers, I wrote the first two prequels in minute detail. The first book (60,000 words) spanned less than two weeks, and the second (50,000 words) spanned only a few months. In those two we get to meet most of the main characters, get a feeling for the action of the story line and so on. Hence the detail.

Now the third (and final) prequel is different. It will span all the way from Comanche Fire to Leaving Amarillo, so about 15 years. Gotta switch gears.

We no longer need to see how Wes or Mac or any of the other current characters will react under fire, for example. We already know. Before, Wes and Mac were junior players in their own story because they were still learning how to be who they are in Leaving Amarillo. But in this one, they have come into their own as Rangers and as men. Earlier, they were still being poured into the mold. They were still malleable. In this one, they are who they are.

Anyway, I had dropped into that rut of providing excruciating detail, and it was both necessary and exciting in the first two books. But for this book it's not only unnecessary, but el b-o-r-i-n-g de mucho.

Lesson: If you're writing off into the dark and you begin to bore yourself, stop, back up and see where you "forced" a turn on the story that the characters didn't want to take. I guarantee you that or something like it is what happened. Either you turned them (You, the Control Freak Almighty Writer on High) or you are forcing them to tell day by day stuff that they really don't want to tell because it's boring.

Take off your "Yes, As A Matter of Fact I Am God" hat, stick a ladder back down in the story, climb down the ladder and go play with your friends again. If you do that, if you just trust your subconscious and run through the story with your characters, you'll be fine.

Note: the above lesson and the ensuing suggestion only works if you're writing off into the dark in the first place. If you're still suffering through trying to write a novel with your conscious mind, you're already doing way too much backing up and moving laterally and all that anyway. For you, one recommendation: Stop Thinking and Just Write.

So today is an adjustment day for me. Much of what I've already written on the story will be included, but as flashbacks or "Hey, do you remember when" moments between characters. What gets cut gets cut. <shrug> I'll move it to the end and not worry about it until the book is finished here in about two weeks. (grin)

Anyway, because it's an adjustment day, I'm not sure how many words I'll get on the page today, but tomorrow I should be back up to speed now that ol' Wes an' Mac took a pair of matching, pearl-handled crowbars and, on a count of three, pried my head out of my a<hem>.

Okay, not the best day ever, but back in the swing. Tomorrow should be a great day. Woohoo!

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2604

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338

Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392

Total fiction words for the month..... 7,343
Total fiction words for the year..... 346,374

June 5, 2015[edit]

Got up right at 2. Checked email and responded to a comment on yesterday's blog. Folks, be careful where you get writing advice. Doing a little writing doesn't qualify a person to teach writing anymore than filling a gas tank qualifies a person to teach auto mechanics. Have fun, but be careful.

Topic of the Night: The Need for a Dedicated Writing Computer

I mentioned here awhile back that I put my little 12" HP tablet/laptop up for sale. It was my writing computer, and I decided I needed a little larger screen, so I bought a 14". It took a few hours to set it up, get the toolbar populated and arranged the way I wanted it and so on, but it was a very worthwhile move. From time to time, people ask why I use a dedicated writing computer. The answer is that I'm training my subconscious mind.

I have a "business" computer on which I check emails, design covers, write blurbs, write blog posts, and all of that. It's the same one on which I used to edit, format, and so on. Attached to that one is a separate 22" monitor, primarily for cover design.

When I sit down at my business computer, I'll be writing nonfiction or doing research or reading or designing. Business stuff.

To my right, on a pull-out from my desk, is my writing computer. It is not connected to the Internet. It doesn't have games on it. In fact, it only has two software programs on it at all: Microsoft Word 2003 (I just like that version) and Notepad (a text editor). That's it.

When I sit down at my desk, turn right and put my fingers on that keyboard, my brain automatically switches to Fiction Mode. My subconscious knows it can come out and play, that it's completely in charge of whatever's going to go on the page.

Having that little writing computer is one of the stronger reasons that I'm able to simply write down the name of a character, give him a problem, plop him into a setting and write a short story in a couple of hours.

A few days ago when I wrote "The Reverend Thomas Mercer staggered along the road" that's all I knew at the moment. I knew the character's name and occupation, and I knew what he was doing at the moment. I didn't even know why. Think about it: he could have been shot or stabbed or drunk. Something was making him stagger. That's all I knew.

But I threw a comma after "road" and continued typing. I jumped down onto the road and walked alongside Thomas Mercer, just watching. That's when I saw "the palm of his right hand pressed hard against the gash in his abdomen."

And from there I just stayed down in the story with him and reported, basically, what he was doing and saying and thinking. What he was remembering.

To write good fiction, you have to get down inside the reader's head and stay there.

And if you're there, and then an email notification pops up on your screen or you wonder about something and decide to open the Internet to check it out or a notification pops up on the screen that it's Aunt Martha's birthday….

Well, that's why I have a dedicated writing computer. Once I'm down there on the road with the reverend, as long as I'm sitting in my chair facing to the right, I don't come up for air.

Now, you don't have to go to Best Buy or Walmart to buy a writing computer. You don't have to buy anything brand new. All you're gonna use it for is writing. So decide what you need (I recommend something with at least 4GB of RAM for speed) and go check Goodwill and other theft stores around your area. Sometimes you can get a working computer for almost nothing.

If you have to buy Microsoft Word, you can probably find it online at eBay for little or nothing. I recently bought another copy of Microsoft Office 2003 for $13. And that was with free shipping.

If you have any questions, ask in the comments section below, please. That way everybody gets to see the question and the answer. (grin)

The Writing

Okay, today was actually a pretty good day. I realized this is the first time I've written a book in this saga that has to bridge two other books. This one will span the 16 years or so from Comanche Fire to Leaving Amarillo. That's why it's been such a heavy starter.

(My conscious mind was wreaking havoc with this thing. It kept tugging at me to write from Comanche Fire forward, no from Leaving Amarillo backward. But of course neither was the appropriate path.)

I won't jinx it by writing here what I'm doing, but suffice it to say I think it's going all right now. Today was another adjustment day. Beginning with tomorrow you should be able to tell by the numbers how it's going. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2109

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1…… 4019 words. Total words to date…… 4019
Day 2…… 2979 words. Total words to date…… 6998
Day 3…… 3051 words. Total words to date…… 10049
Day 4…… 1685 words. Total words to date…… 11734
Day 5…… 1604 words. Total words to date…… 13338
Day 6…… 1450 words. Total words to date…… 14788
Day 7…… 2604 words. Total words to date…… 17392
Day 8…… 2109 words. Total words to date…… 19501

Total fiction words for the month…… 9,452
Total fiction words for the year…… 348,483

June 6, 2015[edit]

Rough night, nursing my ulcer. To bed at 7, up at 9, dozed sitting up on the couch until 2. Checked email and started writing a bit. Ugh. Still, a bad day writing is SO much better than a good day doing anything else. (grin)

Topic of the Night: Short Story Improv Challenge

Okay, the thing is, I've been so down in the middle of Book 3 of the Wes Crowley saga (going well now) that I've kind'a blown off the story of the week.

Now, I'm always saying all you need to write a short story (or a novel, for that matter) is an opening that takes off. And all it takes for a great opening is a Character with a Problem in a Setting.

So here's the deal. In the comments section below, YOU GUYS send me a character (full first and last name please), his or her problem (does not have to be "the" main problem of the story) and the setting. I'll take it from there.

Whichever one I choose will be the new short story of the week over on HEStanbrough.com (Harvey Stanbrough & Friends Writing in Public).

Of course, you don't have to do this, but I would appreciate it. And if you see someone else's character, problem and setting that piques your interest, by all means write the story! Just because I'm writing one doesn't mean you can't.

In fact, feel free to report back here in comments on which c/p/s you chose and what happened. (grin) This could be great fun.

Now I can come up with a character, problem, setting on my own, but that's just majorly boring considering all the talent out there reading this blog. In fact, if this works out, we'll be doing other similar things here in the future.

So c'mon. What's my character, problem and setting for the next story of the week?

The Writing
Another adjustment day today, but a lot of new writing too. When I hit a place where I can once again Just Write you might see a mushroom cloud over Saint David (the town, not the actual guy). (grin)

I realize I still didn't make my daily goal today, but I could have so it's all good. I decided to stop in a place where it left a jagged edge so the writing will pick up smoothly again tomorrow (or the next day if my day goes to the short story of the week tomorrow.)

If you aren't sure what I mean by leaving a jagged edge, put a comment down there and I'll make it a topic of the day soon. It's a neat technique I learned about twenty years ago from SF writer C. J. Cherryh.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2567

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068

Total fiction words for the month..... 12,019
Total fiction words for the year..... 351,050

June 7, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2 after considerable urging by the little Siamese girl. Checked email. I received five responses to my invitation for ideas. I appreciate that. All the ideas were good, and I hope you will write them, or each other's.

Good as they were, none of the ideas really grabbed me, and with time running short I revived a story called "Going Back," a science fantasy story I started writing awhile back with Jack Williamson in mind. I did not write the entire thing today or even this week, but I did some revision, a LOT of cutting, and wrote a new ending for it. The story ended up being 6688 words. The total new words are shown below.

Topic of the Night: No topic of the night tonight. Should be back with this tomorrow. If you like good psychological, brain-twisting stuff, go to http://HEStanbrough.com and read "Going Back."

The Writing
I revised and wrote the story of the week as described above. I wrote a little on the novel, but not enough to even report. Not a good day at writing. But then that's why the goal resets every day.

I'm going to take another stab at Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger tomorrow, and if it doesn't work, I'm going to go to the Nuclear Option: toss it all out and start over.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2009

Writing of "Going Back" (short story of the week)
Day 1..... 2009 words. Total words to date..... 6688 done

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068

Total fiction words for the month..... 14,028
Total fiction words for the year..... 353,059

June 8, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at almost-3. Checked email and piddled for an hour, waking up. WOOHOO! Back on track!

Topic of the Night: Whipping the Conscious Mind

One of the strongest, most harmful ways the conscious mind attacks is by seeming to be helpful. I mentioned earlier that this particular book is unique in the saga because there's a book before it and a book after it in the timeline. That means I know where it's coming from and I know where it's going.

What's more boring than writing something when you already know where it's going? Could things get any worse?

Of course. Enter the conscious mind. Remember, the primary goal of the conscious, critical mind is to STOP you from writing and therefore protect you from rejection, etc. The best way to accomplish that is to try to appear helpful.

When the conundrum of this book first occurred to me, I figured no big deal. Yes, I knew where it started and where it would have to tie in to the next book in the saga, but so what? It still has to be filled with new stories, right? I mean the stories of the various Rangers involved. Their individual stories of battles, tragedies, successes and so on.

But my conscious critical mind kept nagging me:

- "Why not start where you left off with Book 2 (Comanche Fire) so it will flow well and the reader can continue to watch Wes grow?"
- "Why not begin at the start of Book 4 (Leaving Amarillo) and work your way backward? That way you know the reader will make an easy transition into Book 4."

And on and on and on. Not that some of those ideas don't have merit. Possibly they do. It doesn't matter.

What matters is the indecision was stifling me, period. At least three different days of the last ten, I've been on the edge of tossing everything I've written thus far and starting over.

A couple of times I (my conscious, critical mind) even said LOUDLY "Y'know, nobody will notice if you just leave this book out. So what if there's a 16 year gap? Maybe nothing important happened during those years. You don't know. Just chuck the whole thing and go write the second sequel."

Yeah. Seriously.

And you know what would have happened if I'd given in and scrapped this whole book? If I'd just consigned it to the You Ain't Gonna Get Written pile? Then my conscious critical mind would have started in on the next project.

Be forewarned. I've been writing off into the dark (very successfully) since April 2014. This past few days has been the strongest uprising of my conscious critical mind.

Never relax your guard or it will stop you.

And you'll be relegated to the Hey, Whatever Happened To … Club.

The Writing
Made a great run at Book 3. Back in the flow. I think I have two or maybe three more days of adjustment (mixed with new writing) to do, but that's fine. This one has to be a little like pulling alligator teeth because of that beginning-ending thing. I guarantee you I will NEVER write another "bridge" book. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4289

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1…… 4019 words. Total words to date…… 4019
Day 2…… 2979 words. Total words to date…… 6998
Day 3…… 3051 words. Total words to date…… 10049

Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357

Total fiction words for the month..... 18,317
Total fiction words for the year..... 357,348

June 9, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2 this a.m. but after a good night's sleep. Checked email and read DWS from yesterday. Just not a lot there lately.

Topic of the Night: Some Days You Eat the Bear...

Yep, an' some days the bear eats you.

Today, the bear ate me. Hey, this is a blog about life as a professional writer.

If I'm not honest with you about the rough times as well as the easy ones,
I might as well pack it in.

Besides, if you can learn something from my mistake or if you can at least know what to watch for, so much the better, right?

So here's the thing. I, who am an AVID practitioner of writing off into the dark—by which I mean sitting down at the keyboard and trusting my subconscious and my fingers to flail my thoughts across the page without "thinking" about it—I have decided I have to do an outline for this book.

Well, not really an outline. More like a series of touchstones, places and people and situations I have to touch or resolve on my way through this book.

Okay, so yeah, an outline. Ugh.

Shrug. It isn't really that bad, and it happened only because (I swear I will never do this again) I'm writing a bridge book.

In this book, Book 3 of the saga of Wes Crowley, I have to

- span about 16 years
- move Wes, his friends and significant enemies to "adult" status without either flying through the years or trudging through them
- bring in and kill or otherwise dispose of a few important secondary characters who popped up of their own volition during the first two prequels (I have to tie them off because they aren't mentioned in Leaving Amarillo, which soon will be the fourth book in the saga.)
- kill off, retire or transfer a few Rangers who came in during these early years but are not in Leaving Amarillo
- bring in a few new Rangers who ARE in Leaving Amarillo
- revisit and resolve some loose threads in the Talbot family (oh goodness they're fun!)
- and probably a few other things I haven't thought of yet, so

I have two or three more days of adjustment or transition. (I said yesterday I'd probably have a few more days of that.) I'll write some new stuff, yes, but I'll also change some things from first to third person, etc. to bring it all into the same narrative.

So bear with me, folks. This could be a very brief but pretty much invaluable education for any of you who are writing off into the dark, or writing at all. (grin)

I do hope it helps in some way. It already helps me because, as many of you know, I'm an old Marine and if there's one thing a Marine needs it's a place to report. This blog is my place to report. (grin)

The Writing

I have only one thing to add to what I talked about above. Immediately after all that whining, I prepared my "roadmap" (doesn't sound as bad as outline). What I wrote on there made me realize the whole thing would go a lot more smoothly if I started it in a different place. So then I put my fingers on the keyboard and started writing the new opening (yep, just writing off into the dark). I wrote most of the new words for today after I started that. Cool, eh?

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2391

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748

Total fiction words for the month..... 20,708
Total fiction words for the year..... 359,739

June 10, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at about 1:15 but again a pretty good evening's sleep. Checked email and all that. Found a nice note from a lady whose website I designed back when I was doing that. That put me in the mood to play with that stuff again, so I'll probably be updating my site(s) again before too long.

Topic of the Night: Saving Files

I almost wrote a whole long thing here recommending that if you do a rewrite or revision on anything, you SAVE IT as a separate file so you still have the original JUST IN CASE you decide later to go back to it. NOW, since I no longer advocate rewriting or revising or anything other than Putting New Words on the Page, I won't.

If you don't read DWS blog (or haven't recently) you might start again. I think he's about to break loose with good info over there again.

And if you don't read Kristine Kathryn Rusch's website regularly, I hope you'll start. Really great stuff over

there.

I'll try to bring you a good topic of the night tomorrow.

The Writing

Nothing to brag about. A lot of new words, but also a lot of adjusting. Ugh. Awhile back I said I don't celebrate endings. Instead I celebrate beginning. When I finish this particular book it will be like dropping a keystone into place. I will celebrate finishing this one.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3229

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977

Total fiction words for the month..... 23,937
Total fiction words for the year..... 362,968

June 11, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at about 2:15. Checked email and all that. Played with some possible website designs for a couple hours.

Topic of the Night: No Really, You ARE the Worst Judge of Your Own Work (even when you think it sucks)

Okay, anyone who's a writer has heard this.

Anyone who's a writer BELIEVES it as long as they think their work might be worthy of praise.

And anyone who's a writer conveniently FORGETS this when they think their work is "boring" or otherwise bad.

It's goes like this:

- I am a writer.
- Therefore, if I think my work is any good at all, well, I'm the worst possible judge of my own writing so my work must suck canal water from all 50 states.
- However, if I think my work sucks canal water from all 50 states, well, then (ahem) certainly that must be true.

So if you think your work is bad, why don't you then also remember that you are the worst judge of your own work?

Seriously, really, I promise You ARE the Worst Judge of Your Own Work, ESPECIALLY if you think it's "boring" or "dull" or otherwise bad.

That's because it's written in YOUR voice.

You are WITH your voice (or your voice is with you) 24/7/365. OF COURSE you think it's boring.

But what YOU think doesn't matter. At all. In the slightest.

What matters is what READERS think.

The truth on that end is this: Some of them will love it, a bunch of them will like it, and some will think it sucks canal water from all 50 states.

But that's THEM, not you. If you continue to learn and get better at what you do, more and more will love your work or like it and fewer with think that other thing.

So stop whining and write.

Case in point. Partly because I've been wrestling with my WIP for 13 days now, I was beginning to think that, yes, the whole Wes Crowley saga series probably sucks canal water from all 50 state plus the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico.

I was on the verge of settling into that mind-numbing assessment when I received a very nice email from a person who 1) is a writer in his own right and 2) enjoys my work INCLUDING the Wes Crowley series enough that he says he "couldn't put it down" and now that he's read it for pleasure, intends to study it, to see how I did what I did that he liked. Is that cool 'r what? (Thanks LC.)

So again. Use your conscious, critical mind to learn the craft. What you need will seep into your subconscious. Then the only trick then is to Let Go and allow the subconscious to write the story.

There you go, Writers. You have the power. Lay your ears back and attack in all directions.

The Writing
Maybe… maybe my last day of adjustments. Woohoo! I also wrote quite a bit of new stuff today and should—SHOULD—be able to sit down early tomorrow morning and just let my subconscious run and play.

The thought of that actually excites me. Seriously. It's like being a kid on Christmas Eve and KNOWING tomorrow morning you're gonna get a whole bunch of really cool stuff that you're gonna LOVE but you have no idea what it is. MAN I love this job! (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3677

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1…… 4019 words. Total words to date…… 4019
Day 2…… 2979 words. Total words to date…… 6998
Day 3…… 3051 words. Total words to date…… 10049
Day 4…… 1685 words. Total words to date…… 11734

Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654

Total fiction words for the month..... 27,614
Total fiction words for the year..... 366,645

June 12, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at a little after 3. Checked email and all that.

Started piddling with website themes again and found one that's almost perfect. I just have to figure out how to get a couple more things set and I'll make the switch. You won't notice much difference in my websites. Only that now they'll be responsive, meaning they'll adjust to whatever device you're using to view them: computer, tablet, or phone.

Unfortunately, I piddled with website stuff until around 8:30 and then worked on clearing out my office and patching nail holes for another hour and a half. Gonna paint. Now, finally, to the writing.

Looking forward to playing with Wes today. Oh, and tomorrow I really need to knock out the story of the week.

Topic of the Night: Nothing tonight, sorry. Time got away from me today. Thanks for hanging in there with me even when I miss. (grin)

The Writing
Pretty good day of writing today despite getting a very late start. The book's moving along nicely now. I'm hoping to finish this one in the next six days or so, but we'll have to see.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3468

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122

Total fiction words for the month..... 31,082
Total fiction words for the year..... 370,113

June 13, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Checked email and all that.

Despite my best intentions, I did no writing to speak of today. It turned into an unplanned day off from writing. I think this might be the first day off I've taken in the last fifteen days.

That's all right. No biggie. Nobody works at their job every day, although I really wouldn't mind. But other people and situations exist, which is to say Life Happens. I'll be back at it tomorrow, with a twist.

I did get some non-writing related things accomplished today, so that was something. Researched a few more website themes, mostly just playing around. Sometimes we need that, I guess.

Topic of the Night: Twisting when Life Happens

Part of the life happens thing for me is that I've decided to have my office painted. I spend a LOT of time in there, and it's currently and UGLY institutional bluish-whitish blue that looks as if it was shipped here on a flat bottom boat from Uruguay and was seasick the whole way. And it's still seasick.

It's so ugly, I covered as much of it as I could with shelves, stuff stacked on shelves, posters, paintings, an old 3D Marine Corps recruiting sign, baskets, and various and sundry other detritus of living.

And now, finally, I've had it up to here.

Yeah, I know you can't see me right now, but I'm holding my right hand horizontally as high as I can reach above my balding head. Trust me on this. I'm sick of this sick wall.

I love kittens. I love kittens more than I like pizza, or walking, or human beings or (shudder) d-o-g-s or even air. (Sorry, dog lovers, but I've never yet been attacked and had a chunk of my calf muscle ripped out by a "good dog, really, he doesn't bite" while the owner is standing right there.)

But if the color currently on the walls of my office were a kitten, I'd kill it. Period. No hesitation, no regrets.

Now I wouldn't get all juicy. I mean, I wouldn't torture it to death or anything like that. Most likely I'd sneak up behind it and take an axe to that place where the brain attaches to the spine and "turn it off."

But a color—if what's on the walls of my office can actually be called a color—doesn't have a brain stem, so I'm just slam outta luck.

Turns out I had to drive to Sierra Vista and buy a couple gallons of paint. Good paint. Paint that will cover this mess. Of course, I'll still know it's under there, just waiting to leap out at me one day, but I'm hoping the new paint will hold the old stuff in there.

And I don't even have to do the painting. I don't like painting, and my wife likes it better than pretty much anything else except chocolate and cake frosting, so she's gonna paint the blasted thing.

And that's where the twist comes in.

Life happened today, and it's gonna happen again tomorrow. I can't be in here writing while she's slathering the walls with paint, so I'm gonna twist myself out from under the oppressive thumb of Life Happens and find a new place to write for the day.

I might write on the couch. I might write out in the shed. (Yeah, I've got an old desk out there. Duh. I'm a writer.) I might write in my pickup, parked out on Sibyl after I walk in the morning.

So there y'go. When life happens, don't get angry, especially if you're unable to put a bullet through the medulla oblongata of whatever is offending you, just twist away from it.

The Writing
Nada today. Back tomorrow with a passion.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
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Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122
Day 15 ... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 31,082
Total fiction words for the year..... 370,113

June 14, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 3. Checked email and all that. Checked DWS since I missed it yesterday. He's offering Classic Workshops now, only five for now, but at least some of them are worthwhile. I encourage you to check it out at http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-lecture-and-new-classic-workshops/ and scroll down (slightly) to Classic Workshops. I'll be taking one or two of them myself.

Topic of the Night: Learning Redux

I know I hammer this a lot, but it's important. If you're reading this, I assume you're either a professional writer or an aspiring professional writer. If you're an amateur or hobby writer and you're reading this, I assume at least you are serious about the craft and about possibilities.

That's what learning is about more than anything else. Learning what's possible. In storytelling, in writing, in craft and in the radically dynamic, always changing business of publishing.

One of my more prolific sources of information over the years has been Dean Wesley Smith. By that I mean, I probably have learned more from him about the real world of writing fiction than I've learned

from all the other sources combined.

But there were others. I was fortunate enough to engage SF writer CJ Cherryh in a fairly lengthy conversation one time. I was fortunate to study for a full semester under SF Grand Master Jack Williamson, one of the pioneers of the genre. I met and talked with Roger Zelazny several years ago. And there have been at least a dozen others.

I found those folks by seeking them out. If I attended a writers' conference (and if I wasn't a presenter) it was so I could find and talk with one person who was going to be there. I always sought out big-deal, honest to God actual Writers when I sought writing advice.

Seriously, who else am I gonna ask? The one-book or two-book or no-book speakers who populate most writers' conference nowadays? Nope.

English teachers? Creative writing instructors?

Maybe. If I want to write a scholarly essay for The Explicator or if the creative writing instructor has published a LOT in the genre(s) I'm interested in. But otherwise, nope.

So how do we learn?

Well, seek out people who are writing a LOT. Read their work. If you like it, if it grabs you, study it to figure out how. Find those folks at conferences and conventions and pony up a few bucks to be there when they are. Then hang around them and listen.

Another way to learn, when you find an extremely successful writer who's actually willing to share his or her knowledge? Take the classes. Only take the ones that interest you, of course, but take the classes. Some are more expensive than others. Decide what your knowledge is worth to you and then make a decision.

I just signed up for a "classic workshop" that I probably would have taken later anyway. I've taken several of DWS' workshops at $300 a pop, but even then, most often I didn't turn in the homework. I didn't feel the need. I learned a ton of stuff.

With the classic workshops, all the content is there, but you're not allowed to turn in homework to DWS.

Oh darn. No loss for me. And the classic workshops (all of which used to be regular $300 workshops) are only $150.

Great value. Go take a look. See what you think. And maybe soon I'll stop harping on this learning thing.

Maybe.

The Writing

Went great today, and was fun and interesting. Started writing in my pickup (my office was being painted). After my walk (4.6 miles from about 5 to about 7) I went through the Jack in the Box drive-in for a massive breakfast burrito, then back to the desert to write.

Finally got tired of arguing with the steering wheel and drove back to my place. Set up shop in an adobe shed WAY out back (about 100 feet from the house) and it was fine until around 1 p.m. That's when it finally started getting really warm and the battery on my computer was waning.

So then I moved inside to the dining room table. Anyway, in those three or four sittings I wrote the short story of the week. This thing is something completely different. I'll leave it to you to classify.

Nothing on the novel today, but that's all right. Tomorrow, back to full strength on the novel.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3519

Writing of "The Laborer" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 3519 words. Total words to date..... 3519 done

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122
Day 15 ... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 34,601
Total fiction words for the year..... 373,632

June 15, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 1:30. Checked email and all that. By 4:30 I was parked way out on Sibyl Road outside of Saint David waiting for the sunrise. I thought it would be spectacular, and wow, was it ever. Got some great pics. Some will become covers, and some I might even offer for sale. Yep they were that good. I'll put a few up on Facebook soon.

After the sun came up (sixty-some pictures later) I walked. Only did about 4.5 miles but it was good.

Topic of the Night: Heinlein's Rules

Recently a lady asked me whether I ever rewrite things I've already written. Really, I don't.

Now I had written this week's short story of the week in a vastly different form and genre several years ago. What appeared this morning over at HEStanbrough.com as the story of the week was the result of me tossing the original story, dusting off the idea (a character with a problem in a setting) and running with it. The result was "The Laborer."

But this woman wasn't talking about redrafting (what I just described above) and she wasn't talking about rewriting something I'd just written, as in writing a "second draft."

Having heard my line of gab about learning (that writers should continue to learn forever, etc.), she wanted to know whether I ever took down stories and books that I'd already written so I could rewrite them. The reasoning was that I should apply to them what I had learned after they were initially published.

Short answer? Umm, No.

Why? Because that story or novel is finished. It was the best I could do at the time, and it's out there. Silly as it might sound, I honor it for what it is. Then I move on.
Another BIG (for me) why is because I'm striving to follow Heinlein's Rules, in this case, Rule 3:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must not rewrite, except to editorial order. (Harlan Ellison added "And then only if you agree").
4. You must put your work on the market.
5. You must keep your work on the market until it sells.

These are what Robert Heinlein called his Business Habits for Writers. They are absolutely simple and probably the hardest five rules to follow of all time. That makes following them even more attractive.

If you want to be a professional writer, follow them.

Over the next few days, I'll talk about each one and go into some detail.

The Writing

I got back to the novel today, but not really the full-strength return I anticipated. Hit a minor snag. Nothing serious, but something I need to let my subconscious unravel before I get back to it in the morning.

Still, it was a good restart. I hope maybe I'll be finished with this one before the next story of the week is due.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1556

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122

Day 15 … 1556 words. Total words to date…… 40678

Total fiction words for the month…….. 36,157
Total fiction words for the year…….. 375,188

June 16, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Checked email and all that. Again by 4:30 I was parked way out on Sibyl Road outside of Saint David waiting for the sunrise. Another spectacular sunrise and I tried a couple new (to me) techniques with my camera. Hoping for show-worthy results.

Walked again but only about 3.5 miles today.

Final "big" day of painting and rearranging my office. Soon I'm gonna pull up the carpet and replace it with Saltillo tiles (like the rest of the house).

Topic of the Night: Heinlein's Rules: Rules 1 and 2

Actually, I was thinking I had written a pretty comprehensive post on this topic over on HarveyStanbrough.com awhile back. I didn't. Part of my Writing Off Into the Dark audio lecture (scroll down to #12) has a lecture on Heinlein's Rules.

Still, let's go over them here.

Heinlein published these "business habits" as he called them in an essay in 1947 in a book called Of Worlds Beyond. It was almost an afterthought. He said these five business habits had more to do with being a professional writer than any other advice he could provide. He also said although they are deceptively simple, they are also ridiculously difficult to follow. That, he said, is why there are so few professional long-term fiction writers and so many aspirants.

There y'go. That's a thrown gauntlet if ever I've seen one.

I started following Heinlein's Rules and a Zen-like technique called Writing Off Into the Dark back in April, writing one short story per week. I haven't missed a week thus far.

On October 19 I started following his rules in earnest, writing full time. Since then I've written seven novels, a novella, and all those short stories. I'll finish the eighth novel a week or so from now.

I was able to accomplish all of that—ALL of it—only because I was following Heinlein's Rules. That's how important they are.

Note: Everybody who's ever heard of Robert Heinlein knows he was a science fiction writer. That is not news. However, his business habits (Heinlein's Rules) are applicable to ALL writing. If you want to be a professional writer, you should apply these rules. If you can read them and still believe somehow that they pertain only to SF or fantasy or some other specific genre, you should not be writing. You should be doing something you enjoy.

So Rules 1 and 2:

1. You must write.

What can I say other than Duh? If you want to be a writer, you must write. Is there more to this, some hidden meaning? No. It's simple. If you want to be a writer, you must write.

Now, THINKING ABOUT writing is not writing. TALKING ABOUT writing is not writing. Getting Ready to write is not writing. Buying a new writer's chair is not writing. And you know what? Attending meetings of writer's groups or critique groups is not writing. While we're at it, researching is not writing. And my friends, REwriting is most definitely not writing.

Writing is putting new words on the page. Period. All that other stuff (and more) is your conscious mind talking you into thinking you're writing.

You might be the best person in the world. But if you want to be a writer, you must write.

2. You must finish what you write.

Same thing. Duh. It's probably safe to say that all aspiring writers have stacks or file folders or file cabinets or drawers or notebooks chock full of "really great ideas" that they started and never finished.

Some of those are pieces that someone else said they didn't like so you didn't see them as worthy of finishing. Some of them are critique group rejects. Some of them, you've looked at them so many times you're sick of them. And some of them you just never started.

Most often, the most common but unspoken reason you didn't finish is Fear.

If you finish it, you might have to send it off and risk rejection.

So what? Ask yourself, what if they (editors, readers) don't like it? What's the worst that will happen? Will they come to your door, hunt you down and beat you? No. They'll just stop reading and find something else to do. If it's an editor, he'll stop reading and (probably) slip a form rejection note into your SASE and send it back to you. Oh no! What do you do then?

Write the next story and send it off, that's what you do.

If you want to be a writer, you must finish what you write.

Okay, that's enough for today. Now back to my own story for awhile so I'll have something to report. (grin) More on Heinlein's Rules tomorrow.

The Writing

Went well enough today, especially given I spent a lot of the day putting the office back together (about half way there) and with a few other things.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3310

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068

Day 10 … 4289 words. Total words to date…… 26357
Day 11 … 2391 words. Total words to date…… 28748
Day 12 … 3229 words. Total words to date…… 31977
Day 13 … 3677 words. Total words to date…… 35654
Day 14 … 3468 words. Total words to date…… 39122
Day 15 … 1556 words. Total words to date…… 40678
Day 16 … 3310 words. Total words to date…… 43988

Total fiction words for the month……. 39,467
Total fiction words for the year……. 378,498

June 17, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. Checked email and all that. No walking today, and no more pictures for awhile. Did some reading on my camera book trying to find things I used to know but forgot. You know, stuff like the bigger the number the smaller the aperture and the greater the depth of field if it's Tuesday and you've chosen to divide by six by nine point two while standing on your head spittin' BBs. (grin)

I'm not as frustrated as I sound, knock on wood. Ooh, was that the door? I'll get it.

Painting's done, and a big thank you to my wife for all the work she put into it. I still have to put it all back together, but that's me. And trust me, it's gonna take awhile.

Topic of the Night: Heinlein's Rules: Rule 3

So Rule 3: You must not rewrite except to editorial demand. (Harlan Elison added "And then only if you agree.") Now, as I think I mentioned last night, Heinlein first published these business habits back in 1947. That was actually the DAWN of what today we call "traditional" publishing. So contracts were still legitimate, and publishers weren't looking to screw you twelve ways from center.

News flash: In today's wonderful new world of publishing,

(ahem) unless you're a sap who is still yearning to give some traditional publisher your copyright for the rest of your life plus 70 years (ahem)

there is no editorial demand.

Well, almost.

Now, if you submit your shorter work to magazines and journals to try to make a quick few hundred dollars before you indie publish, then you might have some editor request that you make some changes to your manuscript. In that case, you have a choice to make. As Harlan Elison said, "Only if you agree." Okay, but a lot of us don't even bother with magazine markets. A lot of us go straight to press, so to speak.

That's me, actually, a lot of times. I write, I finish what I write, I send what I've written to a first reader for proofing, and then I publish it. Period.

The important thing for you to notice given tonight's topic is that nowhere in that process did I mention the word "rewrite" or "revise" or any of those other backward-looking words.

As I mentioned a day or two ago, I'm following Heinlein's Rules.

I write.

I finish what I write.
I do not rewrite.

On my computer screen, I have a sign. It reads

Write the next sentence.
Then write the next scene.
Keep the story moving forward.

In fact, if you'd like a copy of it for yourself, email me and I'll send it to you.

Tomorrow I'll wrap up this insanity re Heinlein's Rules with a quick review of Rules 4 and 5.

The Writing

Way too much stuff on my mind today. I just didn't get as much writing done as I'd hoped. I fidgeted, partly because I didn't walk this morning, I'm sure.

And partly because whereas WRITE usually takes up about 70% of the space in my head, today it was more like 30% Write, 20% Find a New Responsive Theme for the Website and 20% Putting the Office Back Together. As a result, all three received the pecking of their lives and none was accomplished.

But I did write enough to keep the story moving forward. (grin) Back at it tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1703

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122
Day 15 ... 1556 words. Total words to date..... 40678
Day 16 ... 3310 words. Total words to date..... 43988
Day 17 ... 1703 words. Total words to date..... 45691

Total fiction words for the month..... 41,170
Total fiction words for the year..... 380,201

June 18, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. Checked email and then visited DWS' new website. Interesting. More on this below.

The Day

Dean's been wanting to move his website to a responsive theme. (For non-website types, a responsive theme is one that adjusts to the width of the reader/viewer's device. When viewing a responsive website, the viewer can see the entire width of the site on any device, whether computer, tablet, e-reader or phone, without having to scroll to the right. When viewing a non-responsive site like my current websites on any device smaller than a computer screen, you can see only part of the website at a time.)

Because I've learned so much from him in other areas, I've been dragging my feet a bit on re-doing my own site as I waited to see what he came up with. I'm glad he found what he likes (the free version of a theme called "evolve" from Theme4Press), but I'll be going with a different theme.

I like to be able to manipulate colors and fonts on my website. Pretty sure at this point I'll be going with either Divi by Elegant Themes or Alora by Theme4Press.

As I write this, it's almost 3:30 a.m., so I spent the first hour-plus of my day browsing Dean's site, looking at the site source information, etc. and writing this post. I'll get out of here for sunrise pics and a walk about an hour from now. I'll spend this time writing the topic of the night (below).

Note: I could squeeze in 40 minutes or so of writing. I could write a bit now and wait (as I often do) to finish this post later. But today I'm not going to write until after I walk, get back, get my shower. Then I can settle in and make a run at this book for a few hours. I've all but settled the website question that's been nagging me and I have a fairly good handle on the camera setting stuff that's been bugging me (see yesterday's post) so I'm hoping I can settle back into writing over the next several days.

I just realized I wrote above that "I'm not going to write until…." That's kind of a good point: When you write is a conscious choice. You don't have to wait to write until inspiration strikes or you're in the right mood or whatever. The muse is not the boss of you. YOU decide when you write. The muse (your subconscious) decides WHAT you write. (grin)

Topic of the Night: Heinlein's Rules: Rules 4 and 5

So Rule 4: You must put it (your writing) on the market.

Okay. Back in the day, when you finished a manuscript, you had only one option if you wanted to seek publication: you mailed it. Heinlein's reasoning is transparent. If you don't "put it on the market" (mail it), no possible way will it be published.

Updated for today's wonderful new world of indie publishing, this rule would read either "You must submit it" OR "You must publish it." I most often opt for "You must publish it."

But whether you ascribe to submitting it or publishing it, if you don't do one or the other, your work won't be published.

This rule actually stopped (and stops) a lot of writers who would otherwise have a shot at being professionals.

They succumb to the fear of rejection. If they don't submit their work to readers (either by mailing it to an editor or by publishing it), they don't risk someone telling them it's no good.

Here, let me get that out of the way for you right now. No matter how wonderful your mom said your story is, SOME readers will love it, SOME will think it's all right, and SOME will think it's the worst piece of garbage they've ever seen.

So what do you do when you get a great review? Say thanks and Write The Next Story. Then submit it or publish it.

Okay, so what do you do when you get a horrible review? Say thanks and Write The Next Story. Then submit it or publish it.

And Rule 5: You must keep it (your work) on the market until it sells.

Again, back in the day, this meant once you wrote, finished what you wrote, did NOT rewrite, and mailed it out, if it came back with a rejection slip, you would take it out of the envelope, dust it off, retype any coffee-stained pages, put it into another envelope addressed to a different editor or publication, and mail it right back out.

Today, in our wonderful world of indie publishing, it means either of two things: if you submitted it and it comes back, resubmit elsewhere. Remember, DO NOT rewrite it. Just submit it again. What one editor dislikes, another editor will love. OR it means once you've published it, leave it up there so more readers can find it and buy it.

Apparently, a lot of new writers will indie publish a novel, and if it doesn't sell a b'jillion copies in the first month or quarter or year, they take it down. That's just insane. Leave it up there so readers can find it.

You know what you do then?

Write the next story. Then write the next story. Then write the next story.

Okay, now I'm gonna get dressed for walking. Back in a couple hours. Happy writing. (grin)

The Writing

Well, this is most definitely NOT going to be a 20-day novel. This one might take more like a month. (grin) It's starting to look like it might be longer and more involved than I originally thought. (shrug) That's all right. It will be what it will be.

My friend Duke commented yesterday that he enjoys seeing that I have trouble too sometimes with my writing. Well, you know what I mean, and I know what he meant. Nothing bad. I really don't think I'd be having this much trouble if this were not a bridge book, spanning a gap and therefore having a predetermined end. Ugh. I hate having to "make things fit" when I'm writing.

After this one I'll be off in a completely different fictional world OR I'll go on into Book 8 of the Wes Crowley saga. Either way, I'll be writing off into the dark, not worrying about whether two pieces are gonna match up right. So hang on, Duke. (grin)

Well, again I didn't get as much writing done as I'd hoped. Still a lot on my mind re the website. I'm trying to spend only two to three hours per day on that right now. Also I'm approaching the end game for this one, and I still have three Rangers to kill off (never a pleasant chore) and two more to bring on the team in flashbacks. So probably a few more days on this one.

The good part is that once all these little glitches are solved, this book is going to race to the end. Woohoo! (grin)

Again, I wrote enough to keep the story moving forward. (grin) Back at it tomorrow.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 1632

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392
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Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122
Day 15 ... 1556 words. Total words to date..... 40678
Day 16 ... 3310 words. Total words to date..... 43988
Day 17 ... 1703 words. Total words to date..... 45691
Day 18 ... 1632 words. Total words to date..... 47323

Total fiction words for the month..... 42,802
Total fiction words for the year..... 381,833

June 19, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2:30. Checked email and all that, then started in on website stuff.

The Day

I did almost nothing all day but work on my website, testing one theme or another. I chose not to go with Divi. Too complicated. I'm working with one now called alora. I'll see whether this one's the right one. Other than that, a quick trip to Benson to deliver some meds and then the post office and back here for more web tweaking. I didn't even walk today. Of course this is all on a practice site for now.

Topic of the Night: Writing and English (or Lit) Teachers

I got a degree in English because I wanted to be a writer. Yes, I'm admitting that.

I didn't understand at the time that English degrees are for people who want to teach other people how to teach English. See the closed circle there? Seriously, English teachers don't teach stuff that you can actually learn. What you need seeps into your subconscious. And the rest of it? Well, you get to listen to it again next semester, next year, next whatever. That's why we have a compulsory English class for, like, a b'jillion straight years.

Now, getting an English degree because you want to teach English is admirable. Even if all you're really doing is teaching other people how to teach English.

But getting an English degree because you want to be a writer is just absurd. It's like taking a four-year course in auto mechanics because you want to drive a car. Seriously.

What spurred this outburst is a poster my sister-in-law sent me a couple days ago. It's a little bit off color so I didn't post it here, but I did post it on my writer page at

https://www.facebook.com/AuthorStanbrough. (You'll have to scroll down a little way.) It was supposed to be funny. And it WOULD be funny if it weren't so true.

The number of English (and Literature) teachers who believe they are qualified to teach people how to write fiction is simply staggering. And not to be blunt here, but they're wrong.

That auto mechanic I mentioned a minute ago—would you trust him to teach your 16 year old how to drive? Yeah? How about if the mechanic had never driven a car or truck? Would you still trust him to teach your teenager how to drive?

But why not? After all, he does know all the inner workings of the engine and the transmission and the drive train, right?

Well an English teacher (at least a good one) knows all the inner workings of the language.

She knows all the parts of speech and how to use them to construct a sentence. She knows the various types of sentence structures.

She knows if you have only one subject and one verb and then three hundred more words before the period in a series of prepositional phrases, that's still nothing more than a simple sentence. She even knows that whether a sentence is a run-on has nothing to do with length, and she knows the difference between a run-on sentence and a comma splice.

She knows a lot of stuff, and she is to be heralded and celebrated and carried around on people's shoulders and partied with. (Yeah, I ended a sentence with a preposition. So there.)

But if she hasn't written and published fifty or so short stories, she shouldn't presume to teach people how to write short fiction.

If she hasn't written and published several novels, she shouldn't presume to teach people how to write novels. And You, Mr. or Ms. Writer Person, should respectfully decline her offers to help.

'Cause seriously, unless she's HIGHLY intuitive regarding the nuances of the language and what will or won't manipulate a reader in a certain way, she doesn't know how.

The Writing

Zero writing today. Playing with my website too much. Yeah, basically I played hooky from work. So probably a few more days on this one.

No worries. Back at it tomorrow. The novel, not the website stuff.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
Day 7..... 2604 words. Total words to date..... 17392

Day 8..... 2109 words. Total words to date..... 19501
Day 9..... 2567 words. Total words to date..... 22068
Day 10 ... 4289 words. Total words to date..... 26357
Day 11 ... 2391 words. Total words to date..... 28748
Day 12 ... 3229 words. Total words to date..... 31977
Day 13 ... 3677 words. Total words to date..... 35654
Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122
Day 15 ... 1556 words. Total words to date..... 40678
Day 16 ... 3310 words. Total words to date..... 43988
Day 17 ... 1703 words. Total words to date..... 45691
Day 18 ... 1632 words. Total words to date..... 47323
Day 19 ... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 42,802
Total fiction words for the year..... 381,833

June 20, 2015[edit]

Rolled out right at 2. I seem to be alternating between 2 and 2:30. Very strange. Checked email and all that, then started in on the book.

I actually reached for the mouse on my business computer to go to the website I've been working on. Then I said, "No," and consciously turned right to my writing computer. Whew! Close call. If I'd started on the website stuff again, I probably would have been at it all day again, and I really need to finish this book.

I'm not sure yet what the day will bring, but I know if there isn't a fire in my house, in my office, on my desk, I'm going to make a run at finishing this one today. (grin) I've been hovering around it too long.

The Day

Well, I wrote until about 10:30 when I tied up the last few loose ends and finished the book. Then I worked on the cover (you can see it in a fairly large size at **http://harveystanbrough.com/wes-crowley-texas-ranger/**) and the promo document. That took a couple hours.

Then I went into Benson for lunch. I don't usually celebrate finishing a book, but I was truly glad to be finished with this one. I'm not finished yet with the overall story, but I'm tickled blue to be finished with this transition book. Then back here to finish this post and then work on the practice website some more.

Now today is Saturday, so tomorrow morning I'll get up and write the story of the week before returning to work on the practice website again. It's painful, actually, giving up my Thesis-based website, but I'm getting enough followers now so I'd really like my sites to be mobile responsive. So we'll see.

Topic of the Night: What You Need

If you want to be a writer, or if you are already a writer but you'd like to increase your productivity, here's what you need:

- A Character.
- With a Problem.
- In a Setting.

By the way, you're fortunate to be reading this. At times when I've said this aloud, I've skewed it: "You need a character in a setting with a problem."

Well, I suppose that could work if the setting is also another character. Or something. But you see my point. All you need are those three things: a character with a problem in a setting.

And you can go at it from any direction. If a character occurs to you, give him a problem and drop him into a setting. Does the setting have to "fit" the character? Absolutely not. The story might be a ton more interesting if the character does NOT fit the setting (or vice versa).

If a problem occurs to you, slap it on a character and drop him (or her) into a setting. You get the drift. Okay, so once you have that, what do you do?

- Sit down and write it.
- Sit down at the keyboard right now. Don't stop to get coffee or feed the cat or check your mail or your email.
- Sit down at the keyboard right now, and put your fingers on the keys.
- Sit down at the keyboard right now, put your fingers on the keys, and write whatever comes.
- Don't edit it. Don't filter it. Don't let the English teacher in your mind wonder whether you said it "right."
- Sit down at the keyboard right now, put your fingers on the keys, and write whatever comes.

Okay, because I love each and every one of you to one degree or another, I'm gonna help you out here.

1. Select from among these four names. Please select no more than two. I have such a limited supply of these, y'know. You may alter the last name if you wish but not the first name:

- James
- Barbara
- Jackson,
- Tammy

2. Select from among these four problems. This time, please select no more than one. Note that this does NOT have to be "the" problem of the story if your story takes off. This is just the problem the character has to deal with during the OPENING of your story:

- a door he/she just blocked open is closed
- a water faucet is dripping until he/she goes to check and then it isn't
- he/she is set up on a blind date and arrives early to scope out the other person from outside on the sidewalk only to see his/her opposite number (maybe) doing the same thing
- he/she just overheard a sibling talking about killing his/her parents

3. Actually, you can derive your own settings from the problems above. I think. I hope.

The challenge? Write an opening. Should be around 400 – 500 words or so. BUT IF THE STORY KEEPS GOING, FOR GOODNESS' SAKE WRITE IT!

You may write MORE than one opening if you want. If you're really tough, you could probably get like sixty-four stories out of these little blurbs.

Okay. Enough playing around. I just would like for you to illustrate to yourself that you can do this.

Now, IF an idea peters out, no biggie. Toss it and write another one. Either write the same one again (if you like it) or just choose a different character, problem and setting and play again.

If you want, send me the results. Please send it as a PDF or Microsoft Word document.

And no, I'm not gonna steal any of them. (grin)

By the way, I'll be doing this same thing tomorrow morning early.

The Writing

A good writing day today. This is still a bridge (transition) book, spanning the time from Comanche Fire to Leaving Amarillo and tying those two together, so not an easy or even always enjoyable task. (Enough whining yet? No? Good, 'cause there's more.)

Too much conscious-mind involvement. Since it's a transition book, I've had to get rid of characters who were in Comanche Fire but not in Leaving Amarillo. I've also had to introduce a couple of characters who were not in Comanche Fire but who, in Leaving Amarillo, have been around for awhile.

So anyway, I got it all stitched together and in a format I've never tried before. (I don't mean a format like .mobi or .epub or .paper — I mean a format like begin in present day, write a b'jillion-word flashback, and then return to present day and the big finale.)

Should be interesting to see reader perceptions on this one.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 3684

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (Book 3)
Day 1..... 4019 words. Total words to date..... 4019
Day 2..... 2979 words. Total words to date..... 6998
Day 3..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 10049
Day 4..... 1685 words. Total words to date..... 11734
Day 5..... 1604 words. Total words to date..... 13338
Day 6..... 1450 words. Total words to date..... 14788
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Day 14 ... 3468 words. Total words to date..... 39122
Day 15 ... 1556 words. Total words to date..... 40678
Day 16 ... 3310 words. Total words to date..... 43988
Day 17 ... 1703 words. Total words to date..... 45691
Day 18 ... 1632 words. Total words to date..... 47323
Day 19 ... 3684 words. Total words to date..... 51007 (done) *Woohoo! Free at last, free at last, etc.)*

Total fiction words for the month..... 46,486
Total fiction words for the year..... 385,517

June 21, 2015[edit]

Rolled out at 2:30. I seem to be alternating between 2 and 2:30. Very strange. Checked email and then started in on the short story of the week.

The Day

Well, I wrote until about 7:30 for the story of the week. Then I designed a crazy cover, published the book to Smashwords and Amazon.

Topic of the Night: Repeat of Last Night's Topic: What You Need

This was pretty good (I thought) so I wanted to give everyone another shot at it. If you didn't do this last night, here's another chance.

If you want to be a writer, or if you are a writer but you'd like to increase your productivity, here's what you need.

- A Character.
- With a Problem.
- In a Setting.

You're fortunate to be reading this. At times when I've said this aloud, I've skewed it: "You need a character in a setting with a problem."

Well, I suppose that could work if the setting is also another character. But you see my point. All you need are those three things: a character with a problem in a setting.

And you can go at it from any direction. If a character occurs to you, give him a problem and drop him into a setting. (Does the setting have to "fit" the character? Absolutely not.)

If a problem occurs to you, slap it on a character and drop him (or her) into a setting.

You get the drift.

Once you have that, what do you do?

- Sit down and write it.
- Sit down at the keyboard right now. Don't stop to get coffee or feed the cat or check your mail or your email.
- Sit down at the keyboard right now, and put your fingers on the keys.
- Sit down at the keyboard right now, put your fingers on the keys, and write whatever comes.
- Don't edit it. Don't filter it. Don't let the English teacher in your mind wonder whether you said it "right."
- Sit down at the keyboard right now, put your fingers on the keys, and write whatever comes.

Okay, because I love each and every one of you to one degree or another, I'm gonna help you out here.

1. Select from among these four names. Please select no more than two. I have such a limited supply of these, y'know. You may alter the last name if you wish but not the first name:

- James
- Barbara
- Jackson
- Tammy

2. Select from among these four problems. This time, please select no more than one. Note that this does

NOT have to be “the” problem of the story if your story takes off. This is just the problem the character has to deal with during the OPENING of your story:

- a door he/she just blocked open is closed
- a water faucet is dripping until he/she goes to check and then it isn’t
- he/she is set up on a blind date and arrives early to scope out the other person from outside on the sidewalk only to see his/her opposite number (maybe) doing the same thing
- he/she just overheard a sibling talking about killing his/her parents

3. Actually, you can derive your own settings from the problems above. I think. I hope.

The challenge. Write an opening. Should be around 400 – 500 words or so. IF THE STORY KEEPS GOING, FOR GOODNESS’ SAKE WRITE IT!

You may write more than one opening if you want. If you’re really tough, you could probably get like sixty-four stories out of these little blurbs.

Okay. Enough playing around. I just would like for you to illustrate to yourself that you can do this.

Now, IF an idea peters out, no biggie. Toss it and write another one. Either write the same one again (if you like it) or just choose a different character, problem and setting and play again.

If you want, send me the results. Please send it as a PDF or Microsoft Word document.

And no, I’m not gonna steal any of them. (grin)

The Writing

A good writing day today. I only wrote the story of the week and didn’t reach my daily goal of 3000 words, but that’s all right. Had a ton of fun. Here’s the teaser for the story:

What happens when one guy is so taken with the scenery that he decides when he dies he wants to become part of it? And what happen if he gets so depressed he decides he’d like to become part of it now? Can a lack of Mexican food really cause depression?

If you’d like to see it, drop by http://hestanbrough.com and take a look.

Today’s Writing
Fiction words: 2503

Writing of “Ca-racked” (story of the week)
Day 1..... 2503 words. Total words to date..... 2503 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 48,989
Total fiction words for the year..... 388,020

June 22, 2015[edit]

Rolled out early at 1:30. Checked email and fiddled with my practice website some, then went for a walk. Got in just under 6 miles.

The Day

Before I write anything else on this post, I want to add the URL for Dean's very special blog post about The Real Price of Traditional Publishing. All you folks who are still even considering finding an agent and a "traditional" publisher, PLEASE read this:
http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-new-world-of-publishing-the-real-price-of-traditional-publishing/

It'll take five minutes out of your day, and it can save you a TON of money and disappointment.

As I wrote above, after my waking up routine, I played with my practice website a bit, then got in a good walk. I think my pedometer is off a bit for mileage, but the step count is accurate. I logged 12,677 steps this morning. Woohoo! Over achieving an' stuff. (grin) Of course, now when I try to move out of my desk chair, I'm stiff as a board. Oh well. Tradeoffs.

Anyway, I got back here and piddled with my practice website again for awhile, then wrote a BUNCH of nonfiction (about 2500 words) for a new blog post over at HarveyStanbrough.com and an article for The Write Word (the Society of Southwestern Authors newsletter) and then this blog.

Oh, and I added the Downloads page to this website (FrostProof808.com). You can go there and download three different documents free of charge. The third one is my ebook, The Essentials of Digital Publishing, which has been selling well on Smashwords and Amazon and all the other venues at $9.99 per. You can get it free right now.

I'm offering it free because I've heard lately a lot of writers are going with Amazon exclusively. I assume that's in part because they don't know how to format their Word doc for Smashwords.

And I wanna help. So there y'go.

Y'know, when I got up this morning I was telling myself I'm just not gonna write anything today (well, any fiction). But honestly, I'm kind'a jonesing to get back to writing Wes' story, especially now that I'm not bound by people and circumstances in the future. So we'll see what happens.

Well, at not quite 1 p.m. I was still jonesing. I got as far as opening a new document titled Wes Crowley Book 8. Then I realized I couldn't remember what had happened in the last third or fourth of Book 7. After all, I wrote Book 3 between writing this one and now. This isn't a transition book, but I do still have to start somewhere that makes sense with the ending of Book 7. (grin)

So instead of writing, I read the last twenty pages or so of Book 7. I also took the time to create a "Names in Book 8" file in Notepad, just something to remind me of the various characters and what they do. I find it invaluable. It reminds me of who runs the livery stable, the pecking order around the dinner table in the Martinez household. The names of the local ranch hands and which one wants to be a deputy, etc.

Okay, so I ended up with a sort-of day off anyway. And looking SO forward to writing tomorrow. I can't tell you how tickled I am to know I'll be able to just put my fingers on the keys and write whatever comes. It's worked out well so far, so I think I'll just keep doin' that. (grin)

So tomorrow mornin' early, I reckon I'll belly up to my writin' 'puter an' tap on the keys awhile.

And yes I'm serious about "bellyin' up" and no, it's not funny.

Topic of the Night: Goals vs. Dreams

I think enough time has passed for me to talk about this again.

We all have dreams, and that's good. Folks should dream and yearn and long for whatever.

But we should also have goals. What's the difference? Simple.

A dream is something that is NOT within your control. You can hope for it, and you can want it more than you want anything else, but whether or not you attain it is outside of your direct control. You can even work toward it to increase your chances, but even when you do everything right, whether you attain a particular goal is still out of your hands. It's up to other people.

A goal is something that IS within your control. Can you write a 60,000 word novel in a month? Yes. Can you publish that novel and have it available on every continent and in most major countries (over 100 countries) within a week of finishing it? Yes.

The best goals are those that reset regularly. I say that for three reasons:

- A recurring goal will push you whether you attain it or fall short.
- A recurring goal is forgiving. You soon realize if you fall short, the sky won't cave in. (And if it does, it's only air so like, who cares? Unless you happen to be standing under a passing airliner. Then… well, sorry.)
- A recurring goal leads to streaks, and streaks are gold.

I have two short-term goals. I have a goal to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day. It resets every morning when I get out of bed. If I made my goal the day before, I'm farther along in my WIP. And then today, I need to write 3,000 words. But if I DIDN'T reach my goal yesterday, well, yawn, stretch, that's okay. Today, I need to go write 3,000 words.

My other short-term goal, when it started, was to write a new, original, complete short story and publish it every week for a year. So far, I haven't fallen short on that one yet. And that year (as of today, actually) has turned into a streak of 63 weeks without missing. Woohoo! (grin) Man, that'll make you feel good.
And I have one long-term goal. It's to write 1,000,000 words of publishable fiction this year.

Now, today is June 22 and my word count for the year right now (as of yesterday) was only 388,020. That's pretty good, but it ain't a million words per year. In fact, it boils down to this: in the first 172 days of the year, I wrote 2255.9302 words per day (publishable fiction).

By the way, I recommend you run the numbers on yourself every now and then just to see where you stand. You might surprise yourself.

If I continue at that same pace, over the remaining 193 days of this year, I'll add another 435,394 words. That will bring my total for the year to 823,414. Not bad, but not a million. Sigh.

That's okay. Know what? That goal resets as well on January 1, 2016.

If you'd like to read my original posts on this topic, I recommend reading A Few Resources and Goal Setting and then A Bit More on Goals.

The Writing
Na-Da. As opposed to Ta-Da. As the enchilada said to the beans, backatcha tamale.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 48,989
Total fiction words for the year..... 388,020

June 23, 2015[edit]

Rolled out later than usual at almost 3, probably making up for the last few days.

The Day

After I woke up, I wrote for a little while on what I suspect will be the next story of the week. When I hit a good stopping point, I moved over to my business computer, did some research on a few things (oak trees/regions, etc.) and played around for awhile.

After that I messed with the website a bit more, then went for a walk. Walked only a couple of miles today. Trying to get my pedometer set up right. I think it's at least close now ("close" is defined as being correct within 1/10th of a mile from one mile marker to the next). I know the mile markers aren't exact either, but they're pretty close according to the trip odometer on my pickup.

Of course, I took my camera, a nice Sony Alpha A-65. It takes pretty good pics, but it's still considerably smarter than I am. I hope to draw even with it maybe the next time Dan and I go camping. Supposed to be next month (woohoo!) and I've already decided I probably will not take my writing 'puter with me. I'll just force myself to take a couple/three days off. We'll see how that works out. (grin)

So got back here from my walk and had to download pics. Then edited a few of them, posted them to Facebook so others can see my interpretation of my lifeless, colorless desert. (grin)

So it's almost 11:30 a.m. I'm going to write the topic of the night now, and somewhere around noon I'm going back to the writing 'puter. I think I'll leave the short story for now and start Book 8 of the saga. (grin)

Topic of the Night: Writing Off Into the Dark

Yeah, I know this is a revisitation of the topic, but a new angle occurred to me this morning so I thought I'd share. Maybe it'll help the concept make better sense to those of you who think you might like to try it but aren't sure yet.

First, a disclaimer—I don't care how you write. Seriously. I'd love to see you following Heinlein's Rules and Writing Off Into the Dark, but whether you choose to trust yourself (your subconscious) that much has to be up to you. Will I keep harping on this? Yes. It's freeing. Do you have to listen? Huh-uh. Nope. Up to you.

Recently, I was almost traumatized by writing that transition novel. Of necessity, I had to go back and forth, pinching story possibilities ever tighter and narrower to make sure everything matched. Ugh.

Now I promise I'll stop griping about this soon, but it struck me really strongly how very horrible it is to be forced by circumstances to write like that. Yet that is exactly how many people write every day.

The sad fact is, none of them will be prolific. And none of them will be long-term professional writers. Writing isn't fun for them. It isn't enjoyable. It's drudgery, work. Something from which they occasionally have to take a vacation.

For me, that's what writing was like for Book 3. It was sheer drudgery, with an unhealthy dose of horror mixed in. I was horrified that I might get a detail wrong somewhere, and actually the residue of that fear is still clinging to the edges of my mind.

Now the intelligent part of me says, "So what?" But the English teacher slash critic part of me says, "If you don't read it over and write at least three or four more drafts, you WILL miss something and it will make you look like an idiot."

Well, that did it. I'm not reading it again. I probably have read the whole thing at least three times while cycling back and/or checking on one fact or another to make sure they match up. I said I'd never write that sort of book again, and meant it. It is precisely for situations like this that the use of words like "never" are reserved. Never. There, I said it again.

And that brings me back to fresh air and Book 8. And why I love and advocate Writing Off Into the Dark.

Writing Off Into the Dark is like Life.

In life, we take a step. That one step opens up a range of possible futures. A step in a different direction would have opened a different range of possible futures. So we take that step, and then we choose the next step, then the next step, then the next. That's what we do in life, and we do most of it without thinking. It's the ultimate in freedom.

Writing Off Into the Dark is exactly the same thing.

You sit down at the keyboard, you place your fingers on the keys, a thought crosses your mind and you write it. Then you write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence.

You cannot write more freely than that.

And you cannot write BETTER than that. You can't.

Hey, if you slow way down and consider each word consciously, you can even make your manuscript sound exactly like it came from Ray Bradbury. In fact, you CAN edit and polish and rewrite your manuscript until it sounds exactly like everything else in the publisher's slush pile (just like thousands or even tens of thousands of others are doing right now). But your manuscript will be WORSE for all that effort, not better.

Do you know why Ray Bradbury's stories SOUND like Ray Bradbury? Because he trusted his subconscious. He sat down, put his fingers on the keys, and wrote whatever came. He said so himself.

And the thing is, you can't channel Bradbury's subconscious. But you CAN channel your own. You can showcase your own unique voice, but you can't THINK your way to it. You can only get there by letting go.

Like I'm about to do right now. (It's 11:55 a.m.)

Okay, actually wrote a little more on the short story, then attended Facebook for awhile, so kind of screwing around instead of really writing. I think maybe this short story got hold of me and I want to finish it before I head off into Book 8.

Makes perfect sense to me. With the next story of the week out of the way, I won't have to interrupt Book 8 quite as early in the story.

My friend Gary Vineyard is an EXCELLENT author. He's one of those folks I wish lived closer so we could

hang out an' sling cervezas at each other.

Anyway, Gary sent along a link in which another guy posted what Lee Child said about his writing habits. Now, I'm just passing this along. It's interesting, but I recommend keeping a salt shaker handy just in case you need a grain or two. Remember, professional fiction writers 1) Lie for a living, and 2) Love to screw with aspiring writers' minds.

Way back with StoneThread Publishing I published Gary's book, The Grave on Peckerwood Hill. Of course, now it's available under another imprint. I STRONGLY recommend it. It will have you laughing 'til you're crying (plus it's a serious book with a great protagonist and a very strange cast of characters).

Remember the film, Deliverance? Yeah, well, Gary's book is NOTHING like Deliverance, but it's funny as all get out. And serious. And really good.

The Writing

Well, the writing didn't go all that well today. In fact, I'm gonna publish this early and take the rest of the day off. Maybe my head needs to rest, whatever. I don't know. Anyway, I'll get back on it tomorrow and we'll go from there. I'm sitting at just over 50,000 words for the month with another week still to go, so I'm good with that.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1711

Writing of "Saved" (upcoming story of the week)
Day 1..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 1711
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX done

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 50,700
Total fiction words for the year..... 389,731

June 24, 2015[edit]

The Day

Rolled out at 1 a.m. Spent my usual hour waking up, checking and responding to email and Facebook and all that, then turned to the writing computer. And found my mouse had quit working.

The battery wasn't all that old so after trying several other things I switched it with the battery in my other mouse and they both worked. It's a miracle. Very annoying beginning to the day.

Anyway, then I wrote a session on Book 8. Then broke away and messed with the practice website again. If it doesn't rain this morning, I probably will mow the yard at some point, but otherwise I'm planning to alternate writing and working on the website. Both are creative endeavors, but different enough that one should provide a good break from the other.

Topic of the Night: Starting
Well, it's no secret that I've had a little trouble starting Book 8. But why?

As you read this (and these posts) try to remember that I've only been following Heinlein's Rules and

Writing Off Into the Dark myself since April 2014, and I've only been doing so earnestly (vigorously? emphatically? lunatically?) since October 19, 2014. So I'm still learning too.

Often, like today, what I write in the topic of the night will be something I've just learned or realized myself. If I can cut the learning curve for some of you, so much the better. No need for everyone in line to stub their toe on the same rock.

For years I've been teaching writers to start in the middle of the action (yep, stole it straight from Aristotle's Poetics). My corollary to that advice is that, in the written word, dialogue equals action.

Dialogue makes the reader lean into the story. It's a direct link between the characters (so the story) and the reader.

So if you don't want to (or can't) start with a shoot 'em up or a car chase, start with someone saying something interesting. Then just sit back and let the characters talk.

The Marshal of Agua Perlado (Book 7) ends with a very emotional scene and culminates with Wes and Coralín in the church for their wedding. Not long before that, the mayor and his marshal (Wes) discussed the possibility of getting special dispensation from the governor for Wes to undertake a special mission to another town a few hours up the coast to clear up some corruption. Also Wes and Coralín were about to embark on their honeymoon, and all sorts of bad things can happen on the road, especially when you're in an open surrey.

Okay, so that gave me three good starting places. In any of those I could start with either action or dialogue (or both) and go on with the story. But I didn't choose any of them.

Finally, after allowing the situation to percolate for two or three days, I realized when Book 7 ended, Wes and Charley (his horse) were still living in a small house in Agua Perlado. The house was convenient to Wes' job, just the right size for a single man or a typical couple, with a great barn and stable for Charley. Also it had a great view overlooking the bay around which Agua Perlado is nestled and the Fisherman's Wharf Cantina where Wes was drawn back into law enforcement.

But it wasn't a good place for a man to take his new wife when she was the daughter of a respected senator.
So to begin Book 8 I backed up a bit and started with Wes' future mother-in-law, Abrazia Silva, meeting Wes at the door to her hacienda and asking whether they might have a word before supper. Sounds boring as dirt, doesn't it?

Well, it might have been, but for the things she said and the way she said them. And the things Wes said and the way he said them. And the surprise that happens in full view of the entire family over the supper table. (A couple of other members of the family also had their own little powwow.)

As a result, the conversation and the scene, both of which could have been ugly and boring, are vibrant. They're rich and ripe, and the rest of the story will flow well and naturally from that point.

And that's what a starting point is all about, right? (grin)

So the lesson of this particular topic of the day? Give yourself space. Give yourself time.

The topic wasn't really about starting. It was about giving yourself time and starting at the right place. Even if you're nuts about writing like I am, even if "taking time off" irks the mucus out of you, take the time.

If your subconscious says you need to let a story percolate a bit before you start it (or before you restart it if you're stuck somewhere and "write the next sentence" didn't work and "write the next scene" didn't work), then force yourself to leave it alone.

Find something else to do for a day or two or three and let your subconscious work out the details. When the start is what it's supposed to be, it's wonderful. See below.

The Writing
Great writing day today. Everything else about the writing is above. (grin) Didn't do anything on the story of the week, but that's okay. Got a great start on the next novel in four normal sessions.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 4125

Writing of "Saved" (upcoming story of the week)
Day 1..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 1711
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125

Total fiction words for the month..... 54,825
Total fiction words for the year..... 393,856

June 25, 2015[edit]

The Day

Rolled out at 2 a.m. but a rough night. Spent my usual hour waking up, checking and responding to email and Facebook, checking other journal entries. During that process I read Dawn Turner's entry on a private site where she listed an excellent writers' reference.

To check practically anything about practically any word (even the etymology), visit http://www.memidex.com. My thanks again to Dawn for the link.

Near the end of my wake up hour, I turned to the writing computer to kick things off with a session. Got a little done (very little), then went for a walk. Hit a wash that I haven't been to for awhile. Took my camera but didn't get much.

Showered and had to go put gas in the pickup before I forgot. Then back here with the best intentions of writing.

Only I looked at my practice website, and then spent about a half-hour on it. I felt like I was close to a breakthrough of understanding so I kept playing. When I looked up again, two more hours had passed.

Sometimes it amazes me how my life mimics that of DWS. I checked his website a few minutes ago, and he's doing pretty much the same thing. Except his day is basically backward to mine.

And I'm gonna write now. I have about three hours during which I can write.

Wrote for about a half hour, then back to web stuff for a bit. It's like I'm actively trying to screw off. (grin)

Back to writing again.

Oh, and probably this website is going to change in the next day or two or three. It's the simplest website I have, so I'll change it first. (grin) I hope it will look very much the way it looks now, but it will be fully responsive, meaning you can view it on any device.

Topic of the Night: Perseverance.

Very brief. If you have even a half hour during which you can sit down and advance your story, do so. Every little bit helps whether it's 30 words or 300 or 3000.

If you have a half hour available, whatever you do, don't say, "No, it isn't long enough. I'll wait until I have more time." When you give your conscious mind that much power by excusing it, I can pretty much promise you, you'll never have more time. Something will come up to keep you from writing.

That's why I wrote my first session for about twenty minutes this morning. And three or four other uber-short sessions before I finally settled in and Just Wrote.

I'm tellin' you, friends, there's nothin' like it. (grin)

The Writing

Not too shabby considering I didn't really turn my hand to writing until about a half hour after noon. (grin) The novel is moving forward. I'll take it.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2624

Writing of "Saved" (upcoming story of the week)
Day 1..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 1711
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749

Total fiction words for the month..... 57,449
Total fiction words for the year..... 396,480

June 26, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 1:30 but felt fully rested. During my hour of waking up time, after I checked and responded to emails, I went straight to work on a website. Because this website is my simplest, I chose to make it responsive first.

That hour led to a few more and the site is almost finished. You can check it yourself by grabbing one side or the other of the screen and moving it toward the other side. The header, menu, text and all will shrink, or otherwise fit in the new smaller space. You should be able to view this site on your tablet or phone now, if you have and use those devices.

There's only one glitch as I write this. On the page "My Personas" although almost the whole page is responsive, Eric Stringer's photo and information refuses to squash down. Go figure. If anyone was going to be obstinate about all this, it would be Eric. Anyway, I hope to figure that out before this post goes out.

(Update: it's fixed. grin)

Anyway, no writing today yet, but I'll get to it. (grin)

Wrote for about an hour, then mowed the front yard, then wrote some more. Just typical writer stuff.

Topic of the Night: The Horrible Mistake of Exclusivity

Again, for me, this will be a very short topic. Instead, I'll direct you to the topic of the night over on **Dean's blog**. Remember to scroll down to Topic of the Night.

Now Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) program is absolutely excellent. But if you've considered going exclusive through Amazon's KDP Select program, seriously, you need to reconsider. Please go read what Dean has to say on this topic.

And even if you have NOT considered it, if you have any friends who have considered it. remember Friends Don't Let Friends Go Exclusive or do anything else to short circuit their own sales.

The Writing

Great day of writing today. Did some cycling already, but it was SO worth it. This book is just humming along.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2766

Writing of "Saved" (upcoming story of the week)
Day 1..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 1711
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515

Total fiction words for the month..... 60,215
Total fiction words for the year..... 399,246

Harvey June 27, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 1:30 again. It works. After I checked and responded to emails, I played with my practice website. This is the one I'll move lock, stock, barrel and barn over to HarveyStanbrough.com once I get it put together where it is right now.

I made a few tweaks on this website (FrostProof808.com) as well. It's a little better now, a little smoother, but probably not in any way that anyone would notice.

I spent most of the day on website stuff and did ZERO writing on the novel. I did finish the short story of the week. I still have to get a cover together for it and get it published, but otherwise I've pretty much taken the day off as far as writing goes.

Topic of the Night: Please Be Seated. Uhh, No.

A lot of folks believe to be a prolific professional writer you have to grab a Thermos of coffee, plop your fanny into a chair, and sit there all day with only your fingers moving.

That, my friends, is what we used to call pure-unadulterated bull cookies.

To be a prolific writer, you have only to write for a half hour or an hour, then go do something else. Go to the store. Go mow the lawn.

Take in a movie.

Then come back and write for another hour. Then go do something else.

Then come back and write for another hour or half hour or whatever.

That's what it takes.

It isn't a matter of planting yourself and making like a tree, unable of lateral movement. It's a matter of coming back from whatever else you're doing and writing.

If you've been watching for any time at all, you can easily see how my numbers are growing. Yet most days I write only three to four hours per day. I sleep only about six hours, so that means I'm doing something else for fourteen to fifteen hours per day.

Yet I have over 61,000 words this month so far. Over 80,000 last month. And over 400,000 for the year so far.
So if you wanna write, seriously, Just Write.

Or as we used to say down in Texas, Hold my beer an' watch this.

The Writing

Finished the story of the week, so good enough. The book will be humming along again tomorrow. At least the small bit of writing today pushed me over the 400,000 mark for the year.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1247

Writing of "Saved" (upcoming story of the week)
Day 1..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 1711
Day 2..... 1247 words. Total words to date..... 2958 (done)

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 61,462
Total fiction words for the year..... 400,493

Harvey June 28, 2015

The Day

First A Brief Announcement: If you are NOT subscribed over at HarveyStanbrough.com, I urge you to subscribe to the blog over there. Unless subscriptions here pick up a lot in the next couple of weeks, I might discontinue this blog and continue it in a different form over at HarveyStanbrough.com. So if you don't want to miss anything, I really recommend signing up over there.

Rolled out at 1:30 again. Sigh. I went to bed a little late at 8, but my kitten wanted me up so I hadda get up. After I checked and responded to emails, I played with my website a bit, specifically improving the slider on the presentation page. I'm having a lot of fun with this thing. Looking forward to switching over my main website.

After busting my hump to get the story of the week done and out yesterday, I almost forgot to post it to HEStanbrough.com. (grin) That wouldn't be good. I'm not only supposed to write a new short story every week but POST it so everyone else can see it. I'd hate to break my streak on a technicality. Anyway, I did that just a little while ago after my walk, which was after I played with the practice website. In case anyone's wondering, the streak (writing and posting at least one new short story per week) is now at 63 weeks.

Back from my walk I fixed and ate breakfast. In case you like weird stuff, it was hash browns hot on the plate, then shredded cheese scattered over that, then three eggs over medium on top of the pile, then slice it all up. That way I don't have to bother with eating again until about 3 p.m. While I was eating at my desk, I looked at the pics I took during my walk. Some good stuff. Maybe a few covers to boot. Then I remembered to post the short story of the week to the website (it's there now and will go out in email tomorrow morning). Then I updated this blog post, and now I'm going to open Book 8 and get hot writing it.

Oh, yesterday I also uploaded the final copy of Book 3 (Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger). It's up for preorder and will go live on July 15. Then Book 7, The Marshal of Agua Perlado, will go live on August 1. At that point I'll have seven titles out in the Wes Crowley saga. All since October 19, 2015. Cool, eh?

Topic of the Night: So My Character said, "Hold my beer and watch this."

Those of you who have known me awhile and attended some of my seminars have heard me tell the story of my old Texas friend, Don Johnson, who called me for help one time. He had an old great-grandfather character, an old cowboy, who was supposed to fly to California for his great-granddaughter's wedding.

Only every time his wife drove him to the airport, something went wrong. One time the pickup had two flats. Only one spare.

Another time a passing semi threw a rock through the windshield. Don couldn't get Great-Grandpa on that plane to save his life.

Now at the time, I had never heard of writing into the dark or handing the reins over to the subconscious. Halfway flip, I said, "Well Don, think about it. Has he ever been higher off the ground than the back of his horse?"

No, he hadn't.

So I said, "Why don't you take him to the train station?"

He said thanks and hung up.

A week later, he called me back. He said Great-Grandpa had taken the iron horse to California, attended the wedding, and even managed a smile. (grin)

This is why I preach writing into the dark. This is why I preach getting down IN the story, down in the trenches with the characters, instead of "directing" them as the Almighty Writer On High. (Hear the angels?)

When you're down in the story, running through the story with your characters instead of being the ultimate control freak, your characters will show you who they are.

As I was writing Book 7, The Marshal of Agua Perlado, it became known to me that Maria Elena (a sister to Miguel and Marisól and Julio and Coralín), who is being groomed to become the matriarch of the family, has a very good friend whom she refers to only as her "special sister."

Now, the book doesn't necessary "need" a homosexual woman in the cast, and the fact that Maria Elena is homosexual might or might not have anything at all to do with the main storyline later. But the fact is, Coralín has a sister named Maria Elena and she is a homosexual.

As the writer, could I have simply "changed" her, especially since she is expected to become the matriarch of this important political family? Could I have had her be heterosexual and take a husband and have children?

Sure. But that isn't who she is.

Or couldn't I have simply deleted her? Again, yes, but the family would be lacking one member.

This is yet one more reason to give your creative subconscious mind control over all creative matters. Let the characters be who they are. Let the story go where it will.

If you're writing into the dark, and if the story takes a plunge in a direction you never would have expected, that because IT WAS SUPPOSED TO GO THERE. And if you didn't see it coming, neither will your readers.

Okay, I took an extra little while to write the topic above. NOW I'm turning to the writing. Woohoo! Get to spend some time with ol' Wes. (grin)

Okay, then I talked with Ann Stratton about religious matters and NOW I'm turning to the writing. (grin)

The Writing
The story's moving forward, so well enough I guess. I was hoping for a few big days here toward the end of the month, but it just isn't happening right now. The truth is, I've been too distracted playing with websites. (grin) Maybe tomorrow I'll get back in the full swing of things.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1412

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927

Total fiction words for the month..... 62,874
Total fiction words for the year..... 401,905

Harvey June 29, 2015

The Day

First to repeat yesterday's announcement: If you are NOT subscribed over at HarveyStanbrough.com, I urge you to subscribe to the blog over there. Unless subscriptions here pick up a lot in the next couple of weeks, I might discontinue this blog and continue it in a different form over at HarveyStanbrough.com. So if you don't want to miss anything, I really recommend signing up over there.

Okay, and a second announcement: I've become aware of a new website some of you might be interested in. They host free contests (two currently) and don't appear to be a scam of any kind. Check it out at http://www.inkitt.com. I am not recommending this website. I'm merely making you aware of it. Always, always, before you use the site or sign up, I recommend you read their Terms of Service (http://www.inkitt.com/terms). There are other useful links at the bottom of the Inkitt homepage.

Rolled out at 1. Between the kitten and some idiot dog barking (and barking and barking) there was no use trying to sleep. Sorry, dog lovers, but if you have a dog so that his bark will warn you of some impending danger, then when he barks get up and check. And if it's nothing, for God's sake shut him up. Okay, end of rant.

Have an appointment in Willcox today at 2:30 so I'm gonna go straight to the writing this morning. I doubt there will be much more to the day. No walk today. Probably I'll alternate between writing and working with my website.

Topic of the Night: Nothing....

No topic for the night tonight. I let the day sneak away from me and now I'm out the door to Willcox for an eye appointment.

The Writing
Pretty good day today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3441

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368

Total fiction words for the month..... 66,315
Total fiction words for the year..... 405,346

Harvey June 30, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 2. Immediately I began playing with my practice website.

I found a theme called Freelancer (a child theme of one called Generate Press) and it looked pretty good so I installed it. I was very impressed.

To get the full capability and power of the theme, I had to purchase a plugin (an item that adds further functionality) from the guy who created the themes. It was only $30. I bought it. I installed it.

With the other themes I had tried, once I installed any of them on my main website (HarveyStanbrough.com) it would have taken at least three days to make the switch. For one thing (the big thing) I would have to create an individual widget for each photo on the site. There are over 90 book covers on the Short Stories page alone. Plus I would have had to manually manipulate the whole thing again every week when I added another short story.

I had pretty much decided I was gonna have to update the site every six weeks so I could add an entire row of stories at one time.

Enter Freelancer and the Generate Press plugin.

My entire main website is fully functional right now. All of the pages, including the pages with book covers, are now responsive. The book covers themselves even shrink down. It's nothing short of incredible.

What would have taken me three days wound up taking about three hours. Big difference.

Then I installed freelancer on my story per week fiction website at http://hestanbrough.com. It took exactly a HALF HOUR to have the site completely functional. Again, this is nothing short of incredible.

I hope you'll go check out HarveyStanbrough.com and HEStanbrough.com. It's really cool how quickly and well everything worked out.

I was thinking about installing Freelancer on this site (FrostProof808.com) as well, but there's really no need. This site is probably going to be absorbed into harveystanbrough.com soon.

Writing? No, not so much. I could hammer out an hour or two, but I'm tired so I'm just not gonna mess with it today.

But now all the website stuff is behind me, so beginning tomorrow morning, it's full steam ahead on Book 8.

Oh other day stuff. The appointment in Willcox didn't happen yesterday 'cause the doc's wife had a baby. (grin) I've never been happier to have an appointment cancelled. Blessings on them.

So I'm gonna finish this post, then take the rest of the day to just do nothing. See you in the morning, figuratively of course. (grin)
Topic of the Night: Gonna cheat a bit today. I hope you'll wander over to Dean's blog and check out his topic. It's all about the first half of the year being almost over and re-setting goals and being a writer vs. being a normal person. Good stuff.

The Writing
Yeah, no. Back at it mañana.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 66,315
Total fiction words for the year..... 405,346

July 1, 2015

The Day

NOTE: I'm trying something today with this blog post. I'm sending it from my main website at HarveyStanbrough.com. If it goes only to those who are signed up specifically for this journal, then it's all good. If you are reading this and you are NOT signed up for this journal (formerly FrostProof808.com), please accept my apologies. Thanks.

Rolled out a little after 2. Wow. July just kind'a snuck up on me. Even as I was posting this note yesterday, I didn't equate 6/30 with the end of the month.

My goal for the month of June was to mimic the month of May in word count and get 80,000 words. I didn't. I fell short by about 14,000 words, but I'll take 66,000 and call it good. (grin)

I have to get labs done at 7:30 this morning for a doc appointment next week so I didn't want to start anything with the novel yet. So I continued working on websites a bit this morning, tweaking here and there. By the way, if any of you would like to talk about websites, themes, plugins etc. just email me. I'll help in any way I can.

So web stuff for the first two and a half hours of the day, and then I came here to do this. I'll finish what I'm gonna do here, and then go over to the main blog and write at least one post (maybe two or three) and schedule it for publication. I like to stay a little ahead over there so I don't have to worry about it.

Then I'll go do the labs and then back here to write.

Wound up working with the website again. Sigh. The day's nearly over for me so I'm gonna prep this for the test I mentioned in the opening sentence.

Topic of the Night: Writers' Conferences

I was invited to speak at the Missouri Writers' Guild conference in Kansas City next April. They want me to present in two breakout sessions (45 minutes each) and then teach a master's class on the final day. They're paying me pretty well plus airfare, hotel and food, so yeah, I'm going. (grin) It'll be kind of fun after not having presented at a big deal conference for so long.

At one time, I presented at 18 in a year. That was rough. Anyway, I say that so you understand where I'm coming from here. I've presented at a lot of conferences and I've always given attendees something of value. Unfortunately, that isn't always the case at all conferences or with all speakers.

Many speakers have no problem taking the fee and then dropping names for half their presentation time, telling attendees all about the famous people they've met.

Other speakers will do the same thing and then spend half the presentation time hyping their own books or other products.

Yet others simply don't know what they're talking about. Some people take a great deal of pleasure in teaching things they don't know. Perhaps it makes them feel better about themselves or something. I don't know. There are FAR more of this kind of presenter at conferences now than there used to be, probably because of the money crunch.

But my point here is just this: Before you attend a conference, do your research. Unless it's Breadloaf or the Iowa Writers' Conference or something like that. Do your homework. Look up the presenters. What have they accomplished, especially in the topic they're presenting?

Actually, the same goes for speakers at any gathering of writers. If you go and listen and buy into bad information, it's really difficult to dislodge that and replace it with valid information.

I think it was Mark Twain who once said it's much easier to fool people than it is to convince them that they've been fooled.

So hey, be careful out there.

The Writing
Weak start to the month. I'm not stuck or anything. Allowed my attention to be diverted by this new bright, shiny object. (grin) Back on the writing tomorrow.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1052

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420

Total fiction words for the month..... 1052
Total fiction words for the year..... 406398

July 2, 2015

The Day

Rolled out a little after 2.

Well, first, very pleased to report all three of my blogs are now in one central location. In the upper right corner of my new website, you can now click a link to subscribe to the Story of the Week, The Daily Journal, and/or The Main Blog (Pro Writers category). When you subscribe, your email address will be added to whichever list(s).

If you're subscribed to The Main Blog, you will receive that post in your email every ten days (1, 11, 21 of each month). If you're subscribed to the Story of the Week, you will receive a freshly minted short story in your email every Monday. If you are subscribed to The Daily Journal, you will receive that post in your email every day just after 6 p.m.

Not a lot to the day today. Tweaked the website a bit more. Added a My Personas page and then a page for each persona. That was kind'a fun. I also put a new short story on the Harvey Stanbrough page and on the Eric Stringer page. So if you aren't subscribe to the story per week and you'd like to read a couple of really good short stories, stop by there.

I wrote a little bit, then had to a pretty good walk, then tweaked the site a bit more. Then I wrote a bit more. That's the whole secret to being a writer, as I think I talked about recently in a topic of the night. It isn't just writing all the time (nobody deserves that much Heaven). It's coming back and coming back and coming back.

Topic of the Night: Dean Wesley Smith is Insane

Of course, I mean that in only the best possible way. (grin)

Dean issued himself a new challenge. He's going to write a new original short story every day during the month of July. Even I am not that insane. But I am thinking of starting a pool to bet on when he'll break the streak. I might even tell him about the pool. Maybe that'll keep him going for 31 stories in 31 days. (grin)

Also, remember that his "day" is not like most people's day. His day begins at around 1 p.m. and goes until around 5 a.m. the next morning.

I urge you to go take a look at his blog today.

Also take a look at his topic of the night. It's about creating and using a Title Generator. Interesting stuff, especially if you can write a story off a title. I often do that with my short fiction.

The Writing

Decent day of writing today. I feel like I'm building up slowly or something. I could have hit at least another thousand words today. The story's really rolling. But when NYPD Blue came on, I psyched myself. I decided I'd turn on the TV and turn up the sound and just LISTEN to NYPD Blue but continue writing. Then I'd watch all five episodes on Sunday anyway.

Nope. It's just too good a show. When I turned it on, I stopped for just a moment, was drawn in by the hook, and spent the next 45 minutes (no commercials on Audience) watching an excellent show.

So I got just a little over 2000 today. No biggie.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2486

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906

Total fiction words for the month..... 3538
Total fiction words for the year..... 408884

July 3, 2015

Happy 4th of July Independence Day to everyone. Hope it's an enjoyable one for you.

The Day

Slept 'til almost 3 this morning. Woohoo! But a little late to work.

Okay, first, a very brief announcement. Beginning with tomorrow's post (so July 4), this particular post will go out at 7 p.m. instead of 6 p.m. As it is right now, sometimes this post cuts into my real writing time. Can't have that.

I wrote the topic of the night for this post, then posted a similar one to the Pro Writers blog (the main blog, over 500 subscribers). That post will go out on the morning of July 5. You guys get the challenge first. (grin) See below.

I was hoping to walk this morning (that would be right now, 5 a.m.) but sporadic rain and a hellacious wind negated any possibility of that.

Now that I have most of this post written, I'm moving over to my writing computer to spend some quality time with Wes Crowley and friends.

As part of the day this morning I remembered that although I'd written the story of the week ("Saved"), I forgot to post the cover on the website on The Short Fiction page. Got that done and then, for some reason, I did a count. Sixteen rows of six book each, plus three: 99 short stories, 99 covers. Goodness.

The next short story I write will be my 100th short story, and the 71st story I've written since April 15, 2014. As of July 6 (Monday) in my own story-a-week challenge there will have been 66 weeks. In that time, I will have written and published 71 short stories. Not too shabby for an old guy. (grin)

Topic of the Night: Issuing a challenge

Okay, it's probably been way too long since I issued a challenge. I'm issuing it here first. I will also send it out on my Pro Writers blog (the main blog, over 500 subscribers) probably tomorrow.

This is only an effort to help some of you get to writing. The good thing about a challenge is that you may choose to accept it or not. Completely up to you.

This challenge comes in two forms:

1. Write one new short story every week. The story may be any length and any genre (other than graphic erotica), as long as it has a setting, characters, conflict and a satisfactory resolution. That last one's a biggie. If it's missing either conflict or resolution, it isn't a short story. It's maybe a vignette.

2. If you don't write short stories, then your challenge is to write at least 5,000 publishable new words every week. (This can be from a longer fiction work in progress [WIP] or in memoir or even creative nonfiction.) Or maybe you don't have a WIP. Here's the perfect opportunity to write that novel you've been wanting to write.

I will set up a website where those of you who accept the challenge may post your weekly story. (grin) Again, this is all up to you, but if you don't show your story to others, how can you prove you wrote it?

A few things up front:

1. You retain all rights (copyright) to your work. Seriously. I'm a writer too. I don't want to steal your stuff.

2. You may use a pen name on the site if you want. No problem. Just let me know what it is and I'll set up your account that way.

3. Nobody's going to critique your work. That isn't what this is for. This is only to get you to the keyboard, to get you writing. Birds fly. Fish swim Writers write. I probably will close comments on the website.

4. I can't guarantee you a particular number of readers, obviously. I do encourage you who participate to spread the word to your friends, family, etc. This will be a great opportunity to gain new readers for your work, and for the other writers on the site.

5. Of necessity, I reserve the right to remove any writing from the site at any time. I also reserve the right to close any account at any time.

So there you go.

If you want to accept the challenge, please leave a comment below or email me directly at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. (That's a lot of stuff. I recommend you click the link or copy/paste rather than trying to type it in.) Please let me know your desired pen name (the name under which your stories will be published on the site).

I will respond fairly quickly. If you haven't heard from me within a few hours, email me again.

Once I begin receiving the names of a few participants in this challenge, I'll set up the site and send out the URL, login information and brief instructions to all participants.

The Writing
My own writing went well today. GAWD I love this writing into the dark stuff. Bradbury said if you don't surprise yourself, how can you expect to surprise the reader. Absolutely true.

In the writing yesterday, the mayor revealed something to Wes that made me stop typing and sit back from the computer for a moment. It was incredible. And then today, Wes did the same thing. We even had an old friend from way back in Book 3 pop up here sixteen or seventeen years later.

Wonderful and absolutely the best fun you can have with your clothes on and without a fishing pole in your hand.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3201

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107

Total fiction words for the month..... 6402
Total fiction words for the year..... 412085

July 4, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 1.

Spent an hour or so just waking up, checking out a few websites. I shouldn't do that. Most often when I look at other websites that have anything to do at all with writing I am disappointed or flat out annoyed.

- JA Konrath is an avid supporter of Amazon Kindle Unlimited. For some reason, he apparently sees nothing wrong with supporting Amazon's drive toward a monopoly.
- Another famous guy constantly talks about being certain to hit plot points and rewriting etc. which is contrary to everything I teach. He (and his editor) do occasionally come out with some good stuff so I won't diss 'em too bad. Steven Pressfield and Shawn Coyne. Also a major shout-out to Jeffrey Simon, Steven and Shawn's web guy, who taught me out of the kindness of his heart how to send more than one blog from one URL. Thanks Jeff!
- CampNaNo (I heard) expects around 1600 words per day (they think that's a lot) and preach that writing sloppy is all right. Plus some of the completely irrational crap I read from some of the folks who participate just flat boggles my mind. (I do know there's also some good things coming from good people on NaNo and I know some of you probably swear by it and that's fine. I just can't handle all the negative stuff I hear people telling writers who don't know better than to listen.)
- And then there's ol' Chuck Wendig, who is a prolific professional writer and could do SO much good but still preaches rewriting and a bunch of other stuff that I believe is mega-bad advice. He also feels compelled to curse, purely gratuitously, in very annoying ways. I guess the fact that there's simply no reason for all the garbage language is what makes it so stinkin' annoying.

Every time I do browse the web like this (about once every other month or so) I feel so very frustrated for all the young writer minds out there that are being twisted out of shape by these successful people who are sitting back and flinging the smelly stuff far and wide. I absolutely abhor it.

Then I remember all over again why I'm so very glad I finally found Heinlein's Rules and Writing Off Into the Dark and the (most of the time) true common sense of people like Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rush. Bless their hearts. And I don't mean that as a Texas epithet.

Turning to the writing 'puter now to write the next short story. This is number 100 overall and the 71st story I've written since April 15, 2014.

Okay, finished the short story in three average sessions. About another hour to create a cover, publish it to Amazon and Smashwords, and post it to my website. This is not only number 100, but it's also the first ever to be posted to the main site. Hope it works. (grin)

In the meantime, if you want an advance look, you can find it on my main site at HarveyStanbrough.com. Just click the Free Short Story of the Week tab.

Oh, re the challenge I issued yesterday, it's a GREAT way to hold yourself accountable. So jump on in.

Topic of the Night: No topic tonight. Sorry. Too tired.

The Writing
went very well today. Conceived of, wrote, and published "Death of a Persona," a dark but humorous jaunt through the imagination. My personas are characters in this one. Eric Stringer's personality really shines through. Read this one, and I think you'll see what I like about Eric. And why I had to let another persona

go.

I was going to write some with Wes too, but I decided to take the rest of the day to do nothing. My brain's tired. (grin)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3201

Writing of "Death of a Persona" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 3192 words. Total words to date..... 3192 done

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 9603
Total fiction words for the year..... 415286

July 5, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 2:30 but after being awake and dozing off and on for two full hours. So I'm starting the day with sand in my eyes. Ugh. Happens.

Worked on my Audio Lectures website over at http://HEStanbrough.org to make it responsive as well. I think that's all for websites until someone takes me up on the weekly challenge. Only took an hour. Kind of a fun diversion.

Over on Dean's website yesterday (July 4) was a bit on holidays. Interesting. It's my take as well. (A "holiday" is just another day, or the way I put it, sun comes up, sun goes down.) And then on July 5 there's a much more interesting piece on the importance of challenges and streaks. I'll talk more about that in the topic of the night, below.

Then I'll go to Wes Book 8 and write for awhile. Unsure what the rest of the day will hold, although I'll probably watch a few NYPD Blue episodes, and I'll probably watch at least some of the ladies World Cup soccer championship between the USA and Japan. If you enjoy watching soccer at all, this ladies team is really something to see, the way they constantly pressure the opponent. Extremely good team.

Topic of the Night: Challenges and Streaks as Goals

Everybody here already knows a dream is something that's wonderful to hope for but that is outside of your control. That is, it depends on other people, circumstances, and so on.

But a goal is something that is entirely within your control. It is something that you CAN attain.

You also know I'm a big believer in setting recurring goals, goals that re-set at regular intervals, like daily or weekly or monthly. Although a month is a long way to see at one time.

It's a lot better for me to say I'm going to write one short story per week instead of saying I'm going to write four or five short stories per month, or fifty-two short stories per year. If I took the longer view, I'd get down to the last few days of the month and find myself having to write four or five stories. Or I'd get down to October and realized I need fifty-two short stories before December 31. Ugh.

So I set short-term goals and let the longer terms take care of themselves.

I set a goal to write 3,000 words per day, plus one short story per week, plus (loosely) one novel per month. But if I hit my daily goal, the other two won't be a problem.

Challenging yourself is nothing more than setting a recurring goal. In fact, I think you can't challenge yourself without setting a goal.

And a streak is both an incentive and a goal. Like my short story a week challenge. I set it for a year. The year was over on April 6, 2015. But I'm still going because Streaks Have Power. Once you get a streak going, it's very hard to just stop. And it all goes into your personal literary canon, so what's the down side?

The Writing
Not a bad day writing today. For numbers, almost a repeat of yesterday. What was weird today is that it all happened in two very quick sessions. (grin) I guess my conscious mind is so tired that it just stepped aside while the subconscious was playing. I figure I keyed about 1200 words per hour today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 3186

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293

Total fiction words for the month..... 12789
Total fiction words for the year..... 418472

July 6, 2015

The Day
Rolled out at 2:30.

Had a good walk this morning up an arroyo. Four wheeler ATVs hadn't torn it up too badly, but neither was the sandy bottom quite as packed as I hoped it would be from the rain. Back on roads for awhile I guess.

Been just doing little or nothing most of the morning.

Topic of the Night: Quick, Somebody Stop Me

I hate misunderstandings. I despise them. I screwed up the challenge thing I was trying to do, so I'm withdrawing it, period.

I allowed myself to be turned sideways on the challenge I issued, so I'm pretty much calling it off. I didn't have any outright takers anyway, so not like it's a big deal.

One respondent whom I respect as a writer didn't want to post stories to a website because she'd rather publish them to Amazon and Smashwords.

I don't blame her. That's what I do with mine, but I do that PLUS posting them online. I leave the "free" one up on the site for a couple of weeks, and then I take it down. But it's also up (for sale) at Amazon and Smashwords, and it's there forever. (If you want to read some of my fiction free, visit HarveyStanbrough.com and click the Free Story of the Week tab.)

That's what I would have recommended to anyone who took me up on the challenge. Once a week you write a new short story. You post it to the site, but you also create a cover for it and publish it to Amazon and Smashwords. And then you take it down from the site a week later. Simple.

But this whole idea is just silly, really, from my point of view. To make it happen, I have to set up a new website (I don't mind) and tweak it. I have to teach any participants how to use it. I have to keep a list on hand of user accounts and passwords and take time to help users with various and sundry glitches. And really, I don't have time.

So I'm withdrawing the offer. Dumb idea in the first place.

But hey, if you're a writer, unless you routinely write 3,000 to 5,000 words per day without needing to resort to any kind of motivational "tricks" like challenging yourself, I strongly recommend you challenge yourself.

- Challenge yourself to write XXXX publishable words per day.
- Challenge yourself to write a new short story (or essay or chapter or whatever) every week.
- Challenge yourself, create a streak, and then keep the streak going. You don't have to believe me, but I'm telling you, it's magic if you want to become a prolific professional writer.

If you want to show off your work on a website (in addition to publishing it to Amazon and Smashwords) and if you already have a website, you're all set. I you'd like to do that but you don't have a website, maybe I can help you with that. Let me know.

So forget the original challenge, and forget the ridiculous "revised" challenge.

I get so fired up about what's working for me that sometimes I forget: what works for me isn't necessarily what will work for everyone else or what everyone else will want to try.

Okay, now I'm gonna write for awhile, finally. (grin)

The Writing

I dawdled. When I try to do something to help someone but I don't explain it so they can understand it I feel compelled to make it all better. My "challenge" fiasco apparently helped no one and let me rope myself into explaining it. And that's what I did, off and on, most of the afternoon. So I allowed my writing time to slip away.

Mea culpa.

The good thing about daily goals is they reset every day. Tomorrow, I have to write 3000 publishable words of fiction. I don't have to make up for what I messed up today. Woohoo!

Today's Writing

Fiction words: 1585

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878

Total fiction words for the month..... 14374
Total fiction words for the year..... 420057

July 7, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 2. Checked email, then did some things with an old friend's website. Cleaned it up a bit.

Had another good walk this morning. Just under 4.5 miles out along a rural road out here. I used to walk in town but I don't care for getting bit by all the "good" dogs out there who "wouldn't harm a fly, really." Right.

Checked Dean's blog. More on that in the topic of the night below.

I'm taking a day off my own writing today. I have a routine appointment with my doctor in a little over an hour, so just kind of killing time until then. After that, probably lunch (since I'll already be in town anyway) and then back here.

Okay, the trip to Benson is over. Back here I didn't do a lot. Just kind'a rested for awhile.

And no, none of that has anything to do with the doc appointment. All of that was fine. As I wrote in a poem one time, "It's time to reconnect some frazzled ends, / unbend a few warped planes, demagnetize / a short in my long circuit." (grin)

Wes threw me a curve a couple days ago, something huge and completely unexpected. I'm gonna give it a day and a night to ferment. Note: I'm NOT going to think about it and wonder what happens and all that. That isn't my job. I'm just giving my subconscious to decide what it wants to do, where it wants to go with this new plot twist.

(Yes, there is a plot. Per Ray Bradbury, plot is not something you carefully plan out. Plot is the tracks the characters leave as they run through the story.)

So back at it tomorrow.

Topic of the Night: The Value of Personal Challenges

Dean Wesley Smith started on July 1 with a new personal challenge: he would write a short story every day during the month of July. At the end of the month, he'll compile all of those stories and the accompanying blog posts in a book titled The Stories of July. I'm pulling for him.

Folks, here's a guy who has 40 years as a professional writer and well over 100 novels traditionally published. Yet he still sees value in setting goals and challenging himself specifically.

He has said in his blog for the past three days that if he hadn't challenged himself to write those stories, he wouldn't have written them. Even though he was exhausted toward the end of his day, he forced himself to write the story on each of those three days because he had challenged himself and he didn't want to fail in the challenge.

In that way, he gave power to the challenge, and in that way, he increased his body of work by three more stories.

If at the end of July he's written only 30 stories or only 28 or something, certainly he will have failed to success. But for my money, I think the earlier in a challenge you fail, the harder it would be to continue the challenge the next day.

Add to that the power of streaks. The more consecutive days he goes with a new story written each day, the harder it will be for him to allow that streak to end. At that point it becomes "Well, I've written a short story on each of 12 consecutive days, how can I just let the streak die today?"

And that's the power of streaks.

The Writing
Nada today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 14374
Total fiction words for the year..... 420057

July 8, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at a little after 1. Checked email and took care of some other housekeeping type matters.

Had another good walk this morning. I set out to do 6, but with various side trips to line up pics, I ended up with just under seven and a half miles. Great walk. And so far I can still move. (grin)

Went out about 4:15, was at the two mile mark (per the road signs) by sunrise. Got some pretty good pics. I switched back to my 105mm prime lens. All former Marines who take photos should use a 105mm. (Inside joke.) Anyway, after breakfast and a shower, I got a load of laundry started, then posted some pics to Facebook. You can see them here.

Then over here to write on this for a little while. I'll write the topic of the night now, then go write my own stuff for awhile, then do whatever else and report it all here.

There is a GREAT BLOG TOPIC over at Dean's site. It's all about attitude. Go read it. I command you. (grin)

Okay, I did nothing the rest of the day but write, except that I allowed myself to be distracted by Facebook comments on the pics I posted there. Usually I'm pretty good about turning away from this (business) computer but not today for some reason.

And then I had what I thought was going to turn into an emergency with a long-time Marine Corps friend, but it wasn't. At this point, only three of us remain from the earliest days of our unit at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma. That's just unreal to me. And when I emailed one of those guys today, the email bounced with "no such mailbox."

Freaked. Me. Out.

But I called and he's still around. Thank goodness. I'm gonna go see him in August and then probably swing up to Lake Havasu City and visit with the other one.

Topic of the Night: A Few More Notes on Goals

1. Just Start — Yes, I understand you have Xxxxx going on tomorrow (or next week or whatever) but no, that is not a legitimate reason to put off setting a goal or starting a challenge. Why? Because there will ALWAYS be one Xxxxx or another starting or stopping or going on. There will always be birthdays and vacations and movies you've been waiting forever to see and so on and so on. If you want to start a challenge, just start.

2. Missing Isn't the End of the World — If you miss your goal, what happens? Nothing. The same thing that happens when you achieve your goal for the day. Nothing. So don't sweat it. If you vow to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and you write only 1200 one day, nobody's gonna come beat you up. Your house won't suddenly be foreclosed. The bank won't suddenly come get your car. Nothing happens. So challenge yourself already. Set goals.

3. Adjust Your Goals as Necessary — If you challenge yourself (or set a goal) to write 3,000 words per day and you just can't make it and feel that you need to back that off to 2,500 or 2,000 or whatever, that's perfectly all right. Again, it's YOUR goal. It affects nobody but You. If you only write 1000 words per day (that's about an hour) five days per week that would still be 20,000 words per month. That's a 60,000 word novel in three months, and that's taking every weekend off and only working one hour a day.

4. Set Other Goals Too — I have to shed some fat. Beginning today, my goal is to walk at least 4 miles

per day. Every day. (It's just walking.) And yes, I'm going to keep a journal to motivate myself. Last year I lost from 205 down to 174 pounds.

Okay, this is a biggie. IF ANYONE OUT THERE would like to post your numbers on a website (similar to the way I do here), let me know and I'll set you up with an account on another website. Right now several other people have accounts but only a few are using the site. I'd be happy to let you in if you want in. It's a good way to get support from other professional writers and hold yourself accountable.

The Writing
Finally got back on the horse today. Not as much writing as I'd liked, but the story is flowing again.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2178

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056

Total fiction words for the month..... 16552
Total fiction words for the year..... 422235

July 9, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 2:30. Checked email and went looking on Craigslist for a shell for my pickup. I don't really use it as a truck anymore to haul things that don't need protection from the weather, so....

Will spend the morning in Tucson for doctor and other things, including picking up that shell.

Another good walk this morning, though only a little over 4 miles. The 7.4 yesterday wore me out. (grin)

Took my camera with a different lens. Got some pretty good pics, but nothing to post today. What does this have to do with writing? I use the camera mostly for book cover pics and secondarily for art pics. Sometimes the pic gives me a story idea.

So I visited Dean's site again, and again he wrote a great topic. I urge you to check it out. Just because you hit your goal for the day doesn't mean you have to stop writing. You can move on to the next project or next goal.

Well, as it turns out, reporting the day today will be easy. Thanks to the proficiency of the medical profession, it was pretty much a total loss.

I showed up in Tucson at Pima Heart at 9:30 for a 10:15 appointment. I was to have an echo done on my

heart, have my pacemaker checked, and then visit with the doctor to receive the results of the echo.

I was in the back at 10:10. My echo took a little longer than usual but went fairly smoothly, and the pacemaker check went like butter. I was out of those two by 10:30 with assurances that "We'll call you in a few minutes for the doctor."

JUST UNDER THREE HOURS later I was called back and put in a room. About ten minutes after that, the doctor came in, told me everything was fine, and dismissed me.

I am not pleased.

From there we went to a late lunch at Jimmy John's. (A high note.)

And from there we went to buy a used camper shell for my pickup. The price was fantastic, the guy helped me put it on the truck, and finally, finally, I got back here just in time to write this note and watch NYPD Blue.

So no new topic today, and no writing. I'm reposting yesterday's topic in case anyone missed it.

Tomorrow morning EARLY I go camping. Probably will be gone through Sunday. I won't post during that time but will catch everyone up on Monday's post.

So thanks for your patience.

Topic of the Night: A Repeated Few Notes On Goals

1. Just Start — Yes, I understand you have Xxxxx going on tomorrow (or next week or whatever) but no, that is not a legitimate reason to put off setting a goal or starting a challenge. Why? Because there will ALWAYS be one Xxxxx or another starting or stopping or going on. There will always be birthdays and vacations and movies you've been waiting forever to see and so on and so on. If you want to start a challenge, just start.

2. Missing Isn't the End of the World — If you miss your goal, what happens? Nothing. The same thing that happens when you achieve your goal for the day. Nothing. So don't sweat it. If you vow to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and you write only 1200 one day, nobody's gonna come beat you up. Your house won't suddenly be foreclosed. The bank won't suddenly come get your car. Nothing happens. So challenge yourself already. Set goals.

3. Adjust Your Goals as Necessary — If you challenge yourself (or set a goal) to write 3,000 words per day and you just can't make it and feel that you need to back that off to 2,500 or 2,000 or whatever, that's perfectly all right. Again, it's YOUR goal. It affects nobody but You. If you only write 1000 words per day (that's about an hour) five days per week that would still be 20,000 words per month. That's a 60,000 word novel in three months, and that's taking every weekend off and only working one hour a day.

4. Set Other Goals Too (em) I have to shed some fat. Beginning today, my goal is to walk at least 4 miles per day. Every day. (It's just walking.) And yes, I'm going to keep a journal to motivate myself. Last year I lost from 205 down to 174 pounds.

Okay, this is a biggie. IF ANYONE OUT THERE would like to post your numbers on a website (similar to the way I do here), let me know and I'll set you up with an account on another website. Right now several other people have accounts but only a few are using the site. I'd be happy to let you in if you want in. It's a good way to get support from other professional writers and hold yourself accountable.

The Writing
No writing today but I AM taking my writing 'puter with me on the camping trip. If I can't hammer out 3000 words a day while I'm out there then… well, I just don't know.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1…… 4125 words. Total words to date…… 4125
Day 2…… 2624 words. Total words to date…… 6749
Day 3…… 2766 words. Total words to date…… 9515
Day 4…… 1412 words. Total words to date…… 10927
Day 5…… 3441 words. Total words to date…… 14368
Day 6…… 1052 words. Total words to date…… 15420
Day 7…… 2486 words. Total words to date…… 17906
Day 8…… 3201 words. Total words to date…… 21107
Day 9…… 3186 words. Total words to date…… 24293
Day 10… 1585 words. Total words to date…… 25878
Day 11… 2178 words. Total words to date…… 28056
Day 12… XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month……. 16552
Total fiction words for the year……. 422235

July 10, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 2:30. Checked email and, from that, a few journal entries. Congrats to my friend Bonnie for a good start on a personal writing challenge. Also had an email from my buddy Dan, to let me know he's on his way down. We're headed for the Lower Gila Box on a camping trip this morning around 6.

And just then I realized I hadn't written the story of the week yet. (grin) So as soon as I finish this basic post, I'll get on that. I don't like to limit a story, so I probably won't finish it today. I'll write the opening and see where it goes.

I'm posting this mostly so I can pass along the topic of the night. I'll catch up on numbers etc. when I get back.

Topic of the Night: Just Start

Yesterday and the day before, "Just Start" was the first point of the topic of the night.

It would be EASY to allow my conscious mind to rationalize this opportunity away. My writing 'puter is turned off (I usually just put my computers into sleep mode so they're ready to go). My writing 'puter also is packed in its handy dandy travel bag.

So the conscious mind says to write, I'd have to get it out, turn it on, plug it in, etc. Wouldn't it be better to wait until we get to our campsite? Then, after things calm down, the day's hiking is finished, THEN maybe I can write.

See? That's the conscious mind trying to stop me from writing. It has all sorts of tricks. (Today it didn't work. grin)

And another conscious-mind ploy is already under way because I'm still writing this nonfiction blog post instead of writing my story of the week. (grin) Not Writing Fiction comes in many guises. You have to guard against it, or at least be aware of it, at all times.

And the easiest way to beat it is to Just Start. Which is where I'm going right now. (grin)

The Writing
Started the story of the week, to be finished on the road. (grin) Aren't challenges and streaks fun? This one is due to post Monday morning at 9 a.m.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2238

Writing of "(as yet untitled)" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 2238 words. Total words to date..... 2238

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 18790
Total fiction words for the year..... 424473

July 11, 2015

The Day

Rolled out just before 4:30 (Arizona time) in New Mexico, north of Lordsburg. No checking email. No Internet. Just reality.

Great trip, but Dan and I experienced three days of excitement and adventure in about 8 hours.

Topic of the Night: Refilling the Well

I write from experience, as do most of us. Or at least near experience. I experience things, then put my characters in those situations, then extrapolate out from there. But to do that, I have to experience things. I have to refill the well occasionally. Yesterday, I topped off my well of experience.

PART I

We pulled into our camp about 45 feet away from a 500 foot drop into the Gila River, got out and began re-exploring and taking pics. I take photos for my book covers, but many also give me story ideas. Others are "art photos," suitable for framing and display, and I might someday offer those for sale.

Then it started sprinkling, then raining. We got in the cab of the pickup.
It started raining harder, then hailing pea-sized hail. Soon that turned to dime-sized. That all lasted about an hour, then quit.

Cool. Back to exploring and taking photos, except this time there waterfalls all over the place. I think there were three or four to our south, two or three across the gorge to our west, and another one to the north. The widest (that I could tell) was probably 50 feet. The narrowest was a few feet. But all of them were grandiose. Remember, all of them were falling at least 500 feet.

Then an hour, maybe two later (I think… it might have been longer) Dan noticed a massive blue curtain to the west with a roiling off-white valance. I have never seen a wall of rain quite like that, and it looked like the precursor to a tornado, or maybe a batch of them.

Of course, being guys, we climbed a nearby rocky hill so we could see better. (grin)

When we'd seen all we wanted or needed to see, it was back to the pickup, and just in time.

The rain came. It was horizontal. I am not kidding. Then the hail came. It was dime-sized to quarter-sized, and much of it too was horizontal. The waterfalls I mentioned earlier were flowing hard, but after they plunged off the cliff, the wind caught them and tossed them up so they looked more like geysers. Again, I am not kidding.

The pickup (again, we were parked 45 feet from the edge of a 500 foot drop into the Gila) was jostling around hard from the wind. We seriously considered working our way down a "chimney" between two huge rocks to slip into a 1,000 year old pueblocito that had remained dry throughout.

But everything around the pueblocito was wet and slick, and very near the pueblocito, should you miss your grip on a juniper tree, was that same 500 foot drop with nothing to grab but slick rock and air. We stayed in the pickup. (grin)

With more storm fronts rolling in, we decided to head for Lordsburg. It was apparent we wouldn't be able to use our cots and sleeping bags, etc. Dan couldn't make use of his tarp to protect from the rain because the wind was, well, western wind.

PART II

Several miles down the road there's a large wash. The road ducks into it for about a quarter-mile, then out again. Only the wash was under fast-moving water.

So we "decided" (as if there was a choice) to make camp near a rancher's windmill and catch pen until the wash was not moving.

I slept sitting up in the cab (because I can) and Dan slept under the camper shell in the bed of the pickup. It rained and dropped lightning off and on pretty much all night. However, when I wandered down to the wash in the predawn light, it was damp but not flowing.

About an hour later we drove down a hill, across the wash, up onto relatively firm ground and out. There were other minor adventures, including inching past a motorhome that some moron had parked ON THE ROAD (this is a dirt road, one and a half lanes max) because apparently he didn't want to drive any farther in the mud.

But we were tired and hungry and wet and far from home (just like in the Marine Corps) so we didn't honk or shoot at him or anything when we went by. (The owner and whomever else was apparently asleep

in the back.)

Into Lordsburg at last, we dropped in to a restaurant for breakfast, then out to Shakespeare where a very kind gentleman named Rod allowed us in to take pictures even though they usually only allow people in during official tours. (We told him we're both writers and that our characters know Shakespeare better than we do. Truedat. One of Dan's characters named the place.)

Then Dan dropped south of I-10 to St. David and dropped me off. And here I am. Dan should be home about now, as I write this.

I'm not gonna write today. I'm gonna indulge my other side and enjoy the pics and videos. Tomorrow I'll write the story of the week and then get back to Book 8 of the West Crowley saga.

BY THE WAY if you're one of those who limit yourself to writing "only novels," I urge you to read the topic of the day on Dean's site AT THIS LINK. It isn't today's post.

The Writing
No writing today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of "(as yet untitled)" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 2238 words. Total words to date..... 2238

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
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Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 18790
Total fiction words for the year..... 424473

July 12, 2015

The Day

Rolled out just before 3 a.m. Back to reality.

Still recovering from the camping trip. For a full day and the better part of a night, Dan and I were alternating between the low of being exhausted and the high of repeated adrenaline rushes. That sort of thing wore me out when I was 30. I'm a little older than that now. (grin)

So I messed around the house a bit, went for a walk, got some pics (posted a few on Facebook and I'm

posting one here), then did some things to improve the camper shell I bought the other day. Now I'm gonna take the rest of the day to do nothing. Talk with you again tomorrow.

Topic of the Night: Ending a Streak

This isn't really a topic. Being a little selfish here.

Today I decided to end the streak I began back on April 15, 2014. On that day, I published the first short story in a self-challenge. Following the lead of Dean Wesley Smith, I challenged myself to write at least one new short story every week for a year. I exceeded that goal by quite a bit, but it's still a bit sad to see a streak end.

Last week I published my 100th short story. It also was the 71st short story in a row that I wrote during the past 66 weeks.

I fully intended to write a new short story for this week too. In fact, I started one before I left on the camping trip.

Now I could have simply slapped an ending on it and called it finished, but that would not be in keeping with the spirit of the challenge. I started three other stories today as well. I wrote three more openings. Those openings might become something someday, but for now, they simply aren't working.

Writing Off Into the Dark is a freeing, Zen-like technique. It isn't something you can force. (If you force it you aren't writing into the dark.)

Over on the Free Short Story of the Week blog I'll continue to post a short story each week. For now, those will be stories I wrote before I began the challenge, stories that I haven't shared since the challenge began. If you enjoy magic realism or think you might, the first few will be from Gervasio Arrancado.

The Writing

I wrote more on the story that was going to be the short story of the week and then I wrote three new openings, none of which panned out. I wrote the words, but I can't feel certain they'll be published so I'm not going to count them. So no new publishable words of fiction for today.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
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Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 18790
Total fiction words for the year..... 424473

July 13, 2015

The Day

Rolled out about 2. For some reason, still recovering from the camping trip. I might not walk today, or keep it short.

Today again I messed around the house a bit, went for a walk and got some pics. I also posted a video of the place where Dan and I went camping. It's a calm video, between rainstorms, to show people why we go there.
Also posted a few pics from the trip. Then I ordered a couple of parts for the camper shell and bought some stuff for it. It's coming along slowly. No rush.

Back to writing with Wes off and on today. Like I said, I'm still recovering. Weird.

Topic of the Night: Write the Next Whatever

The best advice I've ever received or given is to Write the Next Sentence. If you keep doing that, your characters will lead you eventually to the end of whatever you happen to be writing.

I was following that advice one day when I realized there WAS no next sentence. A short time later (thankfully) I realized the scene was over. I was trying to move the character into a dead area that was unnecessary and boring. What I needed to do was write the next SCENE. And that's when I became a writer who writes scenes.

A scene is a character (or a few characters) dealing with one situation. To this day, I still can't "write a novel," but I can write a scene. I can write a bunch of scenes. I can write a novel.

If you're the kind of writer who writes scenes, that's good. If you aren't, or if you need a refresher, here 'tis.

1. To begin a scene, put your fingers on the keyboard and write whatever comes.

2. To get through the scene, write the next sentence, then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence. Don't think about where it's all going or even about the second or third sentence: Just write the next sentence.

3. When you're writing a scene, don't worry about how it connects to other scenes. Just focus on that scene.

4. When the scene ends, write whatever comes for the next scene (or for another scene), then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence, then write the next sentence.

5. Your character(s) will lead you to where you need to be.

The whole trick is to Keep the story moving forward.

The Writing
I prepped a couple more stories for the weekly free short story release, and I wrote some on Wes today. Feeling great about the book. Not moving fast right now, but moving toward where it's gonna move fast. It wouldn't surprise me if this one wrapped at about 20 days. Woohoo!

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1730

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786

Total fiction words for the month..... 20520
Total fiction words for the year..... 426203

July 14, 2015

The Day
Rolled out about 2. Checked emails and comments on Facebook (posted some things about the trip). I did walk today, but keep it short at just over 3 miles.

Had a trip to Sierra Vista for two new tires and an oil change for the pickup. Ugh. But it was necessary with a long trip coming up.

Stopped in at the mall and talked very briefly with the Marine recruiter, a young veteran of the goings-on in Iraq. He was wounded. He was also stout, staunch, and upright. He is a protector. Many of the protected do not deserve his fine defense. I hope he never wakes up to feel that everything he and his friends have given was in vain. I hope he never feels his nation abandoned him.

Topic of the Night: Fiction as Escape
Certainly fiction is an escape for the reader. Maybe it's an escape for the writer too. Maybe it's a way to write what ought to be instead of what is.

I suspect Tim McCanlies, the screenwriter who wrote lines for Uncle Hub in the film Secondhand Lions, was thrilled to write what ought to be:

That people are basically good; that honor, courage, and virtue mean everything; that power and money, money and power mean nothing; that good always triumphs over evil; and that love, true love, never dies. ... Doesn't matter if it's true or not. A man should believe in those things because those are the things worth believing in.

Now the protagonist isn't perfect. He isn't all good. He or she is an ordinary human being who does extraordinary (and extraordinarily good) things.

And the antagonist isn't all bad, unless he's Hitler or Charles Manson or an insane religious freak who will behead women and children while the nation that holds itself up as the beacon of the world apologizes for him and strives not to "offend" him. But I digress.

You are fortunate, folks. If you are writers, you are fortunate. You get a chance to write what ought to be. You get a chance to escape the insanity for a little while, and write what ought to be.

Today's Writing

I wrote a bit here and a bit there, before my walk, after my walk, and after the trip to SV. Bits and pieces here and there. Kind'a had the air taken out of me when I talked with my young brother in arms.

Fiction words: 1083

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
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Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786
Day 13... 1083 words. Total words to date..... 30869

Total fiction words for the month..... 21603
Total fiction words for the year..... 427286

July 15, 2015

The Day

Rolled out about 2. Checked emails and other things.

Had another short walk today, right at 4 miles. Looking forward to a good walk tomorrow.

Sticking on one scene in Book 8 for some reason. Standard, average, typical day for me.

Topic of the Night: Eating an Elephant

There's an old joke. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

That's how you write a novel, too. One word, one sentence, one paragraph, one scene at a time.

I was looking over some old stuff, back when this journal was strictly private. Back in late October 2014, one of the new goals I set was to write "six novels in the next calendar year."

Well, that's when I expected to finish my first one by December 8. Then I was going to lay off until January 1, then start writing toward my goal.

As it turned out, I released the first novel on November 11 and the second one on December 7. Then I released the third one on December 27.

I was able to do that once I realized I can't write a "novel." The idea is overwhelming. But I can write a sentence, a paragraph, a scene. I can keep plugging away until the story is finished.

So this calendar year (thus far) I've written five novels and a novella. Those are in addition to the two "extra" novels I wasn't expecting to have finished last year.

But not one time was I able to sit down and wrap my head around an entire novel or even the novella. Each time I wrote a scene, then another scene, then another scene. I ran through the story with my characters, and I wrote down what they said and did. That's all.

And that ended up being eight novels and a novella, and counting. Oh, plus a short story every week. (grin)

So if you're ever overwhelmed at the idea of writing a novel, just remember you can't. Just write the scene. Don't worry about how it connects to anything else. Just write the scene. Then write another one. Then another. Your characters will lead you through.

Today's Writing

Not a lot to it. Finally knocked out the one scene and that's about it. Things will break loose soon.

Fiction words: 1784

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
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Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786
Day 13... 1083 words. Total words to date..... 30869
Day 14... 1784 words. Total words to date..... 32653

Total fiction words for the month..... 23387
Total fiction words for the year..... 429070

July 16, 2015

The Day
Rolled out about 3 (yay, slept in). Checked emails and other things.

Started today by writing a nuts and bolts post on dialogue for the Pro Writers series that posts every ten days. Guess I'll be running through my core seminars again (briefly) in the next several posts over there.

Had a good walk today. Planned to hit about 6 miles and wound up with 7.5.

I was planning to take most of today to finish finding parts I need for that used shell I bought for my pickup, but I decided to write all day today (wife's a work) and tomorrow. I'll plan to take Saturday to do all that other stuff. Not that I won't write Saturday, but writing will slip to Priority 2.

Just a normal non-writer day, really. Laundry, and a lot of other stuff. Normal stuff. Bland, boring normal stuff. I need to go camping again.

Anyway, then I finished off the day listening to The Four Tops sing “Baby, I Need Your Lovin'” (remember that?) and Aerosmith’s “Don’t Wanna Miss A Thing” and then Garth Brooks’ version of “It Don’t Matter to the Sun.” Why? No idea. Except I like perfection. Especially beautiful, emotional perfection. Up there with “Annie’s Song” by Denver or Lonestar’s “Amazed.” Whew.

Topic of the Night: Keeping Track of You
I was browsing back through EARLY installments of this journal for possible topics to update and share (Yes, I cannibalize my own work) when it struck me how far I’ve come as a write in only nine months. Seems very gestational, doesn’t it? (grin)

I started writing a short story each week way back in April, but I started Writing Seriously (novels, novellas and nonfiction plus the story of the week) last October. So for any realistic measurement I’ve been a real writer for only about nine months.

One of those entries was about a short story I wrote. I never dreamed I’d write a western, and it was a western. And toward the end of it, the characters told me they’d been buddies for a long time before they were enemies. They told me where everything started, and they asked me to write the story.

It became a novel called Leaving Amarillo. And then there was another one. Then another. Now I’m working on Book 8 in that saga.

And when I started, I wasn’t sure whether it would be a novel or just a novella. Even Dean Wesley Smith told me to be careful about setting a firm date to have it out.

But the point here is how wonderful it is to glance back over those entries since October 19, 2014 and see how much things (especially my perceptions) have changed. It’s nothing short of incredible.

So I encourage you to carve a little time out of your day each day to make a few notes on a journal. You can do it like I do this one, complete with a daily, monthly and yearly word count, or whatever. I guarantee you’ll enjoy looking back over it a few months down the line.

Today’s Writing
I wrote a little bit on Book 8 of the Wes Crowley saga, but I’m not gonna count it as a writing day. I got a lot of writing done, but very little fiction.

I wrote three blog posts for the “main” blog (Pro Writers category) and scheduled them. I’ll be on a modified vacation from July 25 through August 5 and don’t want to have to depend on OPI (Other People’s Internet). Opi is not a good boy. When everything else is clicking along famously, Opi will screw you every time.

Also went through and prepped (very lightly rewrote, heavily reparagraphed) three more stories from Gervasio for stories of the week and got those pre-posted as well. Incredible how L O N G some of my paragraphs were back when I originally wrote those. Ugh. They read much better now. The poetry and humor is still there, but at a lot better pace.

Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of Book 8 in the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
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Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786
Day 13... 1083 words. Total words to date..... 30869
Day 14... 1784 words. Total words to date..... 32653
Day 15... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 23387
Total fiction words for the year..... 429070

July 17, 2015

The Day
Rolled out about 2, so back to normal. Checked emails and other things, including Dean's blog for the past two days. I recommend reading his topic of the night Here and then Here. Great stuff if you want to see why I say you should NOT get an agent, and why you should publish your work and then leave it published.

I also read a lot of the comments on Dean's posts. Interesting stuff, both for what people "get" and what they don't.

Started out the day around 4 a.m. (after all of the above) just writing with Wes. My intention for today is to write all day in a series of starts. Should work out well. We'll see.

I miss writing short stories. I miss the break that gave me from the Wes Crowley storyline and I miss the excitement of as-yet-unknown characters surprising me. I'm going to continue my hiatus from writing shorts for a while yet, but I'll be starting a new challenge for myself soon.

Now I could just write a short story as it occurs to me, and if a story idea occurs to me strongly enough, I'll do that. But I'm better motivated when I've attached my writing to a goal.

During one break in writing I designed and printed up some new business cards (see below). Very basic, just to get the information out there. Here's one, in case you're interested.

Topic of the Night: Be Careful Where You Get Advice
I talk often about learning to quiet your conscious, critical mind when you write.

Some of you accomplish that, at least temporarily, and that's fine. I don't think anyone has found a way to permanently silence the critical mind. The trick is to remain on guard and to silence it each time it reappears. And it will reappear. It wants to stop you from writing as a way to protect you, remember? If you don't write, you can't publish, and if you don't publish, you aren't opening yourself to criticism.

So you learn to silence or squelch the critical voice when you sit down to write.

You are determined, even, not to rewrite because finally you've understood that rewriting, more often than not, will destroy a perfectly good piece of writing. So far so good.

Then you finish a short story or a chapter in your novel or a scene in your memoir and, for some completely unfathomable reason, you share it with a critique group.

So let me get this straight. You have learned, finally, to trust your subconscious and quiet your own critical voice… and now you're going to subject your writing to someone ELSE'S critical voice?

Uh, no. Bad idea. Maybe baddest idea ever. Don't do that.

And if you DO decide to submit your stuff for critique, AT LEAST submit it to people who have a LOT more publications than you do in the same literary genre (i.e., short fiction, essay, novel, etc.) and/or in the same commercial genre (i.e., SF, western, romance, etc.).

My advice today is the same as it was way back in October. Find yourself a good first reader.

Preferably, this person will NOT be a writer and will therefore not be tempted to bring his or her own voice to the work.

Preferably, this person will be an avid reader of the type of work you write.

Then ask that person to tell you about

- any typos
- any inconsistencies (character wearing a grey jacket when he goes into a bank and a brown one when he comes out, and
- anything else at all that confuses the reader or stops the reading cold.

Then go back and fix those places IF YOU AGREE with your first reader. You don't have to do everything the first reader recommends.

If your first reader starts giving you writing advice, smile, say Thank You and find a new first reader.

Seriously.

Today's Writing
Started on Book 8 by cycling back through a scene that was bothering me.

My subconscious was nagging me, saying the scene wasn't complete, but I wasn't able to see earlier where it was lacking.

Today as I read back through it, the rest of the scene flowed out through my fingers with no prompting from me. I love it when that happens.

Note that this is NOT rewriting. Rewriting is something you do with your conscious, critical mind, counting the number of times you use a particular word or checking to make sure you alternated sentence structures just so or whatever. None of that will improve your work. I promise.

As I expected (and hoped), the writing ran well today in a series of starts. I'm still trying to train myself to write for about an hour (about a thousand words) and then take a break.

Getting pretty good at it. Now if I can just keep doing it that way. (grin) Still, with my overall goal of wanting this novel finished and out before July 25, I think it's not going to be a problem.

Fiction words: 4018

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
Day 5..... 3441 words. Total words to date..... 14368
Day 6..... 1052 words. Total words to date..... 15420
Day 7..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 17906
Day 8..... 3201 words. Total words to date..... 21107
Day 9..... 3186 words. Total words to date..... 24293
Day 10... 1585 words. Total words to date..... 25878
Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786
Day 13... 1083 words. Total words to date..... 30869
Day 14... 1784 words. Total words to date..... 32653
Day 15... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 36671

Total fiction words for the month..... 27405
Total fiction words for the year..... 433088

July 18, 2015

The Day
Rolled out at 1:30. Checked emails and weather. I don't mind being up a little earlier this morning since I want to make headway on this novel but I also have to visit Sierra Vista today. If the place there doesn't have what I need that will turn into a trip to Tucson. Ugh. Hope not.

Started the day (after a waking up period) writing this post. Now, almost two hours after I got up, finally I'm turning to the writing computer.

Well the neighbor's dog went nuts outside, triggering an hour long series of time-wasting crap. I hate it when a bunch of erratic stuff takes over and is so jerky and staccato that it seems to take only ten minutes and then I look up and an hour of my life is gone. I mean, I started this whole getting up in the early morning thing specifically to give myself a few hours of quiet.

Anyway, all of that led me in a roundabout way to doing updates for the websites I run for other people. I'd scream, but I know it wouldn't do any good. (grin)

It's all right. Life happens, eh? I just need to breathe. I anticipated a few hours of writing time early today because I have to go to SV later, but I don't have to go to SV at a particular time. I'll just put off the trip a bit.

And if I have to I'll wait and go Monday.

No walk yesterday and no walk today.

Got to SV, found the parts I needed (the struts to hold up the shell "door" when I raise it) and a new lock. The lock didn't work so I modified it. Still didn't work but I can't return it 'cause I modified it. So I started looking through all my old keys. Turns out I found one that will work fine on the old lock, so I'm all set.

(grin)

Hardest item to locate is the weather-stripping-like hard foam rubber to seal the cap to the bed, but I've already come up with a solution for that so it's all good.

Got two more hours done on Book 8 and now I'm gonna take a little break, then finish the writing for the day.

Almost ran out of time. This is supposed to post at 5 p.m. so I have to get it out. Makes my word count a little light.

Topic of the Night: Following Your Passion

I posted something about this awhile back. I might make this a post over in the big blog too. That's the blog for those who think maybe perhaps they might want to consider pursuing the idea of thinking about becoming a professional fiction writer on the outside chance that eventually they are able to carve out ten minutes or so. To think about it. (grin) I'm kidding. Maybe.

That blog's also for all levels of writers: hobbyists, aspirants, and professional writers alike.

But no matter the level of your aspiration or achievement, you should follow your passion.

That provides you automatically with two goals.

- If your passion is writing, then write.
    - Note: If your passion is Something Else, then by all means do Something Else. Nobody's holding a gun to your head here. And if your passion is drama, drape one arm over your forehead and complain constantly what terrible drudgery writing is, but that you simply must do it because you are compelled by forces greater than yourself. (grin)
- And if you write, then write what you're passionate about. It doesn't have to be a particular genre. It can be a set of characters or a particular story line or an untenable situation or whatever.

The point is, it's easy to sell out to what you believe the market wants. It's also easy to stop writing and focus on selling what you've already written. And there are any number of other copouts.

What's difficult in any art form (including writing) is to follow your passion DESPITE what your family and friends and critique group members say, and DESPITE lagging sales, and even DESPITE your own critical voice.

When I started writing full time, if you'd said I was going to write a western ANYthing I'd have laughed in your face. No possible way would I write a western, despite my background.

But I wrote one story that turned out to be a western. Then I listened to the characters, who told me a story nobody else had written. I started writing it. Now it's in the eighth book and I'm expecting the whole story to fill nine or ten books. And although the story contains strong elements of romance and fantasy (magic realism) and suspense, at its heart it's a western.

I do not have a passion for writing westerns, but I do have a passion (am driven) to write Wes Crowley's story. So that's what I write. DESPITE the fact that the worst selling commercial genre for books is the western. (grin)

I also have a passion for writing Mario Puzo type characters, mobsters and the like. And little inner-city wannabe gangstas. And deep down inside I have an urge to write a detective series, maybe mixed in with

the mobster characters.

I guess vampire and werewolf stuff is really big right now and has been for awhile. Yet I know I probably will never write a vampire or werewolf story. It just isn't my thing. Even my magic realism is closer to reality than that stuff. (grin)

So as a writer, you have a decision to make: Follow your passion or follow the markets?

Today's Writing
No comment beyond what's above in the "Day" section. No time. (grin)
Fiction words: 3116

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
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Day 11... 2178 words. Total words to date..... 28056
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786
Day 13... 1083 words. Total words to date..... 30869
Day 14... 1784 words. Total words to date..... 32653
Day 15... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 36671
Day 16... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 39787

Total fiction words for the month..... 30521
Total fiction words for the year..... 436204

July 19, 2015

The Day
Rolled out at 2:30. Checked emails and weather. No rain, so maybe a walk a bit later.

Messed around waking up, then drove out a little early for a sunrise walk. Got some great perspective pics of the railroad tracks and maybe a couple good cover shots, but the walk was truncated when I kept encountering swarms of flying ants. Even got a video of them, little monsters. (grin)

Back at the house, while it was still cool I mounted the gas struts on the back lift door of the camper shell. So that works now. Yay.

Gave my 30 quart cooler to one of my sons last time he was out here and now I need one so pulled out a really old Coleman metal cooler. We'll see how long it keeps ice. If it works, I'll use it. If not, off to Wally World later.

Sat down to chill for a bit, then decided to mow the yard. Normal, everyday stuff. So all of the above plus some other life stuff, and it's after noon, and now I'm gonna turn to the writing 'puter.

Life doesn't stop when you're a cop or a waiter or a truck driver, and it doesn't stop when you're a writer. Only difference is that I have really flexible hours. (grin) With the day dwindling, I decided to make this a

day off. I'll get back to Wes tomorrow.

Topic of the Night: Heinlein's Rules, with an addendum, with two addenda
I've talked about Heinlein's Rules before, so this will be brief. This is taken from an article I posted in this journal back in October.

I added a Rule 6 to Heinlein's Rules. As a refresher, here they are, followed by a bit of discussion:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must not rewrite.
4. You must publish (or submit).
5. You must keep your work published (or keep it in the mail, submitted).
6. If you try to follow these rules, you WILL fall off them at times.
    - That's okay, and it's perfectly normal.
    - To succeed as a writer, once you realize you've fallen off the rules, you MUST get right back on them again.

Did you get that Rule 6 with its two addenda? Listen, seriously, if you find you have real trouble following these rules, I strongly recommend you visit http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lecture-series/ and sign up for his Lecture 1: Heinlein's Rules.

It costs $75, it's composed of 15 videos, and it will be the best investment you've ever made in your writing. I promise.

One warning: During his lectures, Dean will tell you that Every Writer Is Different. It's his mantra. I suspect he developed it when he was dodging bullets at writers' conference all those years. It's a gentle way of saying, "Not everyone can be a professional writer. You ain't it."

But don't let it fool you. Don't accept the opportunity to cop out. Elsewhere he also says he doesn't know a single professional writer who isn't following Heinlein's Rules. If you can handle the truth, that's the truth.

Now, when he says that or something similar to describe the difference (for example) between his writing process (sprinting) and Kris' writing process (slow and steady), he means it.

But when he's saying something like "Following Heinlein's Rules works for me but every writer is different," he's giving you an easy way out if you aren't disciplined enough to enjoy having fun making up stuff for a living.

Today's Writing

Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
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Day 14… 1784 words. Total words to date…… 32653
Day 15… 4018 words. Total words to date…… 36671
Day 16… 3116 words. Total words to date…… 39787
Day 17… XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month……. 30521
Total fiction words for the year……. 436204

July 20, 2015

The Day
Almost 3 when I rolled out this morning. Checked emails and weather. No rain, so I'll walk this morning.

Had a great walk. Only about 5.5 miles but at a good pace despite shooting a few pics. Got a couple cover pics so it's all good.

The guy below is a baby cotton tail and he was naturally curious. Hopped just off the trail, then stopped and looked while I took pictures. Might be a girl. I see she has a little green bouquet just above her left eye. (grin)

My old Coleman metal cooler is working fine. Just have to slap silicone on one minuscule leak. Woohoo! Older SERIOUSLY is better.

Hmm. Good thing once again I have really flexible hours. (grin)

Had an eye doctor appointment in Willcox (I don't do SV whenever I can help it), then hung around town for another hour buying some stuff I can't find within 30 miles of Good Ol' Benson who's running everybody out with their Stinkin' High Taxes.

Anyway, I wrote some this morning, but with the day dwindling (again) and with a massive storm sitting just southwest considering thinking about deciding whether it might possibly move into Saint David, I'm reporting early.

Topic of the Night: Writing Off Into the Dark, Part One
This is writing without an outline, without a plan, without allowing your conscious mind to "direct" every action of every character and every word that comes out of your characters' mouth.

Look, if someone tells you how a novel ends, do you still want to read it? Most people would say No.

So if you know before you start writing what's going to happen, why do you want to write it? Isn't that boring? It is to me.

Bradbury once said (paraphrasing) How can a writer expect to surprise the reader if he doesn't surprise

himself?

And when asked about his process for writing Dandelion Wine, he said he wrote it like he wrote everything else. He got his coffee, he sat down at the typewriter, he put his fingers on the keys, and he wrote whatever came.

So writing off into the dark. Sit down at your writing computer, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write whatever comes.

Trust it. Trust your subconscious to tell the story. It's been doing that a lot longer than you've known the alphabet.

I once wrote that this technique is an offshoot of Heinlein's Rules. That isn't really true. You can write off into the dark even if you aren't following Heinlein's Rules. But they do go together very nicely.

If there were specific rules for writing off into the dark they would read like this (annotated with an explanation to save space):

1. **Sit down at your writing computer and Just Write.** (Just Write: Don't think about what you want to write. Don't outline. Don't strive for a plot; the characters will bring it with them. Don't plan and force the characters/story to conform to your plan. Don't do anything else. Let Go and Just Write.)
2. **When you get stuck, Just Write the Next Sentence.** Then Write the Next Sentence. Then Write the Next Sentence. (When you get stuck, Just Write the Next Sentence: If there is no next sentence, if nothing comes [Don't Think!], that scene is probably finished. Just write the next scene. Open it by writing whatever comes into you mind, then write the next sentence. Lather, rinse, repeat.)
3. **Run your spell checker.** (Remember, this is done in critical mind. It's imperative that while you're doing this, you don't start reading even small snippets of the story and "fixing" it. Like one little drink for an alcoholic or one cigarette for me, it will lead you to a lifetime of rewriting and polishing instead of submitting and publishing. And you WILL polish the good off your story.)
4. **Send to your first reader, then publish.** (If you have a first reader, when it comes back, fix whatever the first reader caught IF YOU AGREE. If you don't have a first reader, or if you don't have a good first reader, skip it and just publish.)
5. **Write the next story. Writers Write.** (Self-explanatory. Writers Write. Just Write.)

So there you go. Tomorrow's topic: Writing Off Into the Dark, Part Two (You do NOT want to miss this. And stop being stingy. Tell your friends!)

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1678

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
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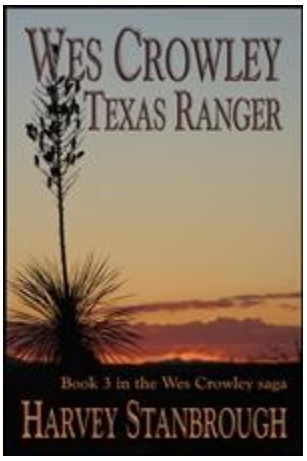
Day 12... 1730 words. Total words to date..... 29786
Day 13... 1083 words. Total words to date..... 30869
Day 14... 1784 words. Total words to date..... 32653
Day 15... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 36671
Day 16... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 39787
Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469

Total fiction words for the month..... 32199
Total fiction words for the year..... 437882

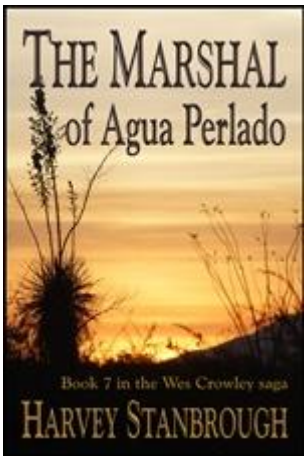
July 21, 2015

The Day
Rolled out about 2:30 after a rough night babysitting an ulcer. Definitely no walk today.

Books 3 and 7 of the Wes Crowley saga came in from CreateSpace today. I order three or four copies of each major title I put out just to have a few on hand. Here are the covers of those two:



I got some pretty good writing done today, but not fully up to speed. Took a lot more time off to just sit than anything else. Still, advanced the novel. And I'm getting closer to the point where I'll see the ending.



I did find out today that one of the lesser characters in the previous book is bigger than I first thought. And she's bigger because she has a personal vendetta against Wes. That was kind'a interesting. Not sure yet why she has a vendetta, but I hope they'll tell me in the next day or two. (grin)

So I did nothing today other than resting and writing, and all of the writing came in short bits here and there. It'll be better tomorrow.

Topic of the Night: Writing Off Into the Dark, Part Two To Direct or Not to Direct
In yesterday's post, I wrote that WOITD is writing without allowing your conscious mind to "direct" every action of every character and every word that comes out of your characters' mouths.

True dat.

So that means you have a choice.

Most of us have been taught that we're supposed to study and plot and do character studies and outlines and Control The Snot out of our characters. Wrong.

How would you like it if someone else were controlling everything you did, everything you said?

Well, your characters feel the same way.

In a good marriage or a good friendship, the parties run through life together. They simply enjoy each other's company and are there for each other. And as you go through life you get little snapshots and opinions of each other. Later, perhaps in memoir or when talking with another person, you convey your

memories of that time.

It's the same in a story. Exactly the same. Exactly.

The brave writer doesn't "direct" anything. The brave writer, like the brave friend or lover, runs through life with her characters, exploring and experiencing the same things they do AS THE CHARACTERS experience them. And the writer writes down what the characters say and do.

Notice: The writer doesn't DIRECT the characters to say and do certain things. The writer merely observes, AS she's running through the story with the characters, and writes down what they say and do.

If you do this, if you trust your subconscious and write off into the dark, your characters WILL surprise you, I promise.

Practically every day mine do or say things that I had no idea they were going to say or do. Many times, as I'm writing, I stop, sit back from the computer and laugh out loud. And when the characters take me completely by surprise, I know they'll do the same for the reader.

By the way, there have been some GREAT posts over at http://deanwesleysmith.com over the past few days on the business of writing. I hope you're following his blog.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 1805

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Day 14... 1784 words. Total words to date..... 32653
Day 15... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 36671
Day 16... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 39787
Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274

Total fiction words for the month..... 34004
Total fiction words for the year..... 439687

July 22, 2015

The Day
Rolled out about 2:30. No walk again today and maybe no writing. I have to be in Sierra Vista to visit my mechanic at 9 a.m. We'll see how the day unfolds from there.

I could have written earlier, but I didn't. Well, I did write, but nothing good. During my waking up time, a

comment on Facebook set me off. I spent the next three hours writing some nonfiction spurred by the comment. Ugh.

Sometimes I'm an idiot. What I have to say would have no effect on the comment writer. It would make no difference whatsoever, and it serves only to further frustrate me. So three completely wasted hours there. I can't believe some of the choices I make sometimes regarding how I spend my time.

And I won't start writing on Wes now because I don't want to get deep into a scene and have to interrupt it for my little side trip to SV this morning. It's looking more and more like I'll miss my original goal of having this book done and out before July 25. Might have to finish it on the road. But that's all right. I allowed too many other things to take priority too many times.

Great post over at http://deanwesleysmith.com. He talks about yet another benefit of writing into the dark. Good read.

Sure enough, the gaskets that my truck needed even frustrated the mechanic. He started at about 9 this morning and had to re-do things until around noon when my wife came to pick me up. I'll go get her at her work at 5, then back to SV (actually Whetstone, just north of Huachuca City) to get the truck.

Valve cover gaskets now look more like O rings than gaskets, for anyone out there who used to replace your own. We used to buy one set of valve cover gaskets and save the box. Then the next set we cut out of the box the first set came in. Cereal boxes worked too.

I decided to call this a day off writing. Too much other going on.

Topic of the Night: Setting Priorities
Very briefly, you set your own priorities. You make choices, conscious or otherwise, in practically every moment.

Become aware of those choices. Own them.

If they aren't what you want, or if the results aren't what you want, begin changing how you assign priorities.

Basically,

- you can be a plumber or cop or housewife who Also Writes when other things and people allow you to, or
- you can BE a writer who also does other life things.

I am a writer who does other things, either when I choose to or when life happens. Today it was mostly life happens and partly kickin' back. (grin)

What to take from this: It's all up to you.

Today's Writing
No writing today. Zero.
Fiction words: XXXX

This really is kind'a strange. I have only 18 writing days on this novel, so not bad, but that's over 31 calendar days. For me that's a long time. I don't think I've taken off that many days before while writing a novel. Anyway, this one is closing down on the end so I think the writing will go pretty fast from here on out.

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Day 16... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 39787
Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 34004
Total fiction words for the year..... 439687

July 23, 2015

The Day
Rolled out about 3. Checked email and did some website maintenance and updates.

Turned a quick 3 mile walk.

Went out to the shed and loaded a bunch of my youngest son's stuff into the pickup for the trip north. Really looking forward to the road trip.

Sam Turner from SSA and RWA sent me a very interesting survey comparing readers' choices in 2015 vs. 2013. There's a lot of good information there if you want to improve your marketing efforts.

The main page for the survey results is here: http://blog.marieforce.com/the-results-are-in-2015-reader-survey/.

The results in table format are here: https://marieforce.com/images/docs/2015ReaderSurveyChart.pdf.

You'll see a couple other links on the main page as well.

Great post again over at http://deanwesleysmith.com. This guy's hitting on all cylinders right now, and I for one am glad to see it. He and I are the same age. What he's doing with his writing right now is nothing short of incredible. Today he talks about multiple cash flows in this new world of publishing. Well worth a visit.

Once again I didn't get any writing done. I'm getting things (the truck, my personal belongings, "trip stuff" etc.) ready for the trip so I'm kind of scatter brained right now.

When I think I might sit and write a bit, I think of some small something I need for the trip. Thing is, I'm one of those who does everything as it occurs to me. If I didn't, some of it would fall through the cracks.

So I'm living kind of a stuttering, stammering lifestyle right now filled with starts.

Is this an example of my conscious mind stopping me from writing?

Unequivocally, Nope. I love the story and I want to get it finished so I can do the cover and move on to the next one. No stoppages or slowdowns or confusion. I'm just wired about this trip.

As an aside, I keep thinking I should have just stayed here. The initial plan was to send Mom to Indiana to see her boys while I stay here and hold down the fort. But we eventually decided on Plan Two, which was me going as well, but driving instead of flying. I don't fly, and I won't until the nation regains its senses and puts personal safety above politically correct speech and searches.

So we're driving. The only massive downside is that I have to leave my youngest daughter here and I don't like it. But being here in familiar surroundings will be better for her, so I'm forcing myself to do it. (grin)

Nervous dad and the whole bit. Here's a little pic of my baby girl, asking me nicely to put down Mr. Camera before she goes all Siamese on my backside. (grin)

Not really. She's the sweetest baby kit I've ever known. Actually, I woke her up while she was napping in the late afternoon sun. Probably that look on her face is *You're gonna put some stupid caption with this an' show it to people aren't you?*

And yes, I am. Did.

Okay, since I started this travesty, here's how she usually looks. (grin)

Topic of the Night: No topic tonight. I'm pooped.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

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Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 34004
Total fiction words for the year..... 439687

July 24, 2015

The Day

Rolled out about 3. Checked email and did some other waking-up stuff.

Good rain last night so no walk today. Not sure I can even get out of my driveway. (grin)

No matter how the writing turns out today, more than likely I'll be going on hiatus from this blog for a few days. I might post and I might not. I'll be driving about 11 hours per day, so I don't need the unnecessary added pressure of hoping I can get this out before 5 p.m. each day, especially when I won't be able to write while I'm driving.

Now I understand I could just pre-post a "placeholder" post or something like that, but that just seems

kind'a silly. I DO have a streak going with this, but using an occasional placeholder post seems like cheating to me. Plus I wasn't really trying to get a streak going with this. It just kind'a worked out that way.

I started this back in mid-October to give other writers and would-be writers a glimpse at my life since I've started writing fiction full time as a profession. I guess taking an occasional hiatus is part of the writing life too, right? (grin)

I have posts pre-published and ready to go on my other two blogs, the Pro Writers series and the Free Short Story of the Week, so those will continue. But this is a daily post of what I did that day, and probably all I'm gonna be doing is driving and sleeping.

If I see anything interesting that has to do with writing or the writing life along the way I'll certainly report it. In fact, I might well take a few notes at the end of each day and then report those when I have time.

Topic of the Night: Starting and Restarting

First, if you're an aspiring writer and you haven't started that novel or short story, it's time. And by "started" I don't mean you thought about it or researched it or told all your friends you were gonna do it. By "started" I mean you sat down at the keyboard and actually put words on the page.

If you haven't started yet, and if you're having trouble with that, chances are you're the victim of an unreasonable fear.

If you write something and it's great, absolutely nothing will happen. And if you write something and it sucks canal water from all 50 states, well, nothing will happen then either. So sit down and Just Write.

To get better, you have to practice. And to practice, you have to start.

So you're ready and willing, and the question now is, What do I do next?

Sit down at the keyboard, put your fingers on the keys, and type whatever comes. Just type whatever comes.

You're not writing a story or a novel. You're just writing a sentence.

Then write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence. Keep doing that, and before you know it, you will have written a scene.

Once you write that first sentence, DON'T stop and critique it. DON'T stop and edit it. DON'T wonder how it's gonna fit with whatever's coming in the future.

Just write the next sentence.

If you want to start, that's how you start.

And if you need to restart, that's pretty much how you restart too.

More than likely I won't be writing for awhile. Probably at least three days, and maybe the whole ten days.

And of course, I'm nearing the end of a WIP, unless I finish it today, which is doubtful.
So I'll be restarting when I get back.

For restarting, the best method I've found is to cycle back and read some of what I've written. With some stories I might start at the beginning and read all the way through, allowing myself to touch the manuscript here and there.

Caution: if you do this, DON'T look for "too many" instances of a particular word or "too many" uses of a particular sentence structure. Your subconscious knew what it wanted when it wrote that segment the first time. But if you happen on "moss" and know "lichen" is closer to what you were wanting to convey, by all means change it. So when I say I'll allow myself to touch the manuscript as I read through it, that's what I mean.

With this story I'll probably cycle back about five pages, maybe ten, and read from there. Then when I get to the end of what I've written, I'll just write the next sentence, then write the next sentence.
In other words I'll give it all over to the higher power: my subconscious: and let it do what it does best. (grin)

By the way, another good blog post over at http://deanwesleysmith.com today. A weird analogy that didn't really work for me, but I got his point. I think you will too.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: 2713

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 6749
Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
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Day 15... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 36671
Day 16... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 39787
Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 45987

Total fiction words for the month..... 36717
Total fiction words for the year..... 442400

NO POSTS FOR JULY 25, 26, 28 – 31, AND AUGUST 1 – 3.

July 27, 2015

Hey folks, just a note to update everyone and hope you're hangin' in there.

Arrived at our destination today. I was thinking (wrongly, not at all unusual for me) that we'd be on the road three days, then here three days, then on the road again three days. Kind of a weird symmetry in that.

But no.

Actually, not counting today, we'll be here four full days. The current intention is to head back early on Saturday morning. So there's that.

Not sure how much writing I'll get done while I'm on the road at all. I truly am jonesing to 1) finish The Battle of Tres Caballos and 2) get started on either another novel in a different world or Book 9 of the Crowley saga. And I've also been jonesing lately to write more short fiction.

I have a feeling if I am able to carve out some writing time while I'm on the road it will be for short stories.

This is all very weird for me. I spent years traveling around the country speaking at writers' conferences and conventions. But at those places, I was alone and not visiting relatives or friends. All of that translates that whenever I wasn't entertaining new friends in the local bar, I was up in my room WRITING.

Whole different deal here. So we'll see.

Not sure even when I'll post again, so until then, please keep writing and enjoying yourself. Just have fun!

Harvey

Oh! Over at Dean's website, he's putting up some good stuff recently. So go look already.

August 4, 2015

The Day

After roughly 6 months of driving around the country, I'm back. Okay, it was only 11 days, inclusive, but I drove on both the first and last day, so "inclusive" is also true. Ugh. And yes, it seems like every bit of six months.

ANYway, I'm back. Cleaning up email, running updates, issuing a refund to a guy who bought my computer and changed his mind, etc.

Today, I am happy to report, will be the last day of the worst streak I've ever endured: eleven straight days without writing so much as a word of fiction. I would literally rather be beaten than go through that again. Well, I WON'T go through that again, not voluntarily.

If you haven't visited Dean's website lately, I urge you to do so, and read back over the past several days for the Topic of the Night.

The Writing

First, I finished up the month of July with only 36717 words. Absolutely terrible, but it will get better. After all, the monthly goal resets every month. (grin)

Tomorrow morning, I will begin writing the climax and the ending. To do that, I will read back over maybe the last ten pages or so. Then I'll put my fingers on the keys and type whatever comes.

I expect to finish the book within a few days, and then I'll be on to something new. Or Book 9. Much depends on Wes.

To set a restarting point, below I've put in the numbers thus far for The Battle of Tres Caballos.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
Day 1..... 4125 words. Total words to date..... 4125
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Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 45987
Day 20... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 0000
Total fiction words for the year..... 442400

August 5, 2015

The Day

Back on schedule, rolled out about 2:45. Actually, staying on schedule wasn't difficult. Although every other state in the vicinity (north/south) was intelligent enough to stay on Central Time, Indiana's legislature voted several years ago to put most of the state on Eastern Time (Doh!).

But it worked out well for me personally. I went to bed around 10 p.m. local time (7 my time) and got up around 5 or 6 a.m. local time (2 or 3 my time), so no real adjustment. (grin)

High hopes yesterday to get back to writing today, and I will, but as I write this it's mid-morning. Before sunup I spent time with my beautiful little daughter and did some waking up things, then updated several websites, cleaned up my inbox, etc. I also began doing some research that I might need for a novel someday.

With first light, I opened the back of my pickup and camper shell and began unloading the stuff we brought back from Indiana. Seems to me it's roughly twice what we hauled up there to our boys, but that might just be me and my grouch levels after the eleven day trip. Probably that's it.

So unloading finished, put most of it away (at least temporarily) I did some more research on the same topic. A little while later I noticed the yard needed to be mowed. Like many in Arizona, I do not have a "lawn," but I do have an extensive yard. Out came the mower, overfilled it with gasoline per usual, started it and away I went. Now that's finished.

It's always struck me as ironic that I'm living in southeast Arizona, loving the "wild" look of it, and mowing the yard. If the place was mine, I'd do the whole thing over in rock. Large rock. Massive rock. One big huge massive gargantuan rock with a house on top. That's what I'd do.

Okay, gonna chill a bit, then get a shower, then see what comes and hope it's the story. Back in a bit.

Well after the shower, remembered I had to replenish groceries here in the house, so went shopping, then back here for lunch. Still exhausted from the trip. I might end up taking a nap today. If I do it'll be the first since about first grade. (grin)

No nap, but I decided this has to be another non-writing day. Just too tired. Cleaning up from the trip, plus the trip itself took a toll. Onward to tomorrow.

Topic of the Night: Life Happens, or Letting Life Happen

There's nothing we can do about it anyway, and sometimes life just happens and we have to let it.

That's the case with me for the last eleven days and now today. I could have written while I was gone. I could have just carved out some time and written. The people I was around (most of them) would have understood and a few would even have envied me. They probably wouldn't even have interrupted me with noise or otherwise.

But I didn't write. I didn't even try to carve out the time because I didn't want to run the risk of being interrupted. When I'm writing, I want to write. I don't want the TV to come on. I don't want someone in the next room to laugh at something cute or stupid someone else did or said. I don't want the house to be on fire and someone to come rushing into the room to order me out, as if the burning house is more important than the fact that I'm right in the middle of a scene.

When I'm writing, I want to write. If I don't feel I can guarantee that, then I'd rather just not write until it's time.

I think that's what I did again today, albeit subconsciously. As much as I wanted to write, my subconscious knew better. It shut down. And just before it shut down, it sent me a series of commands on all frequencies:

Rest up from the trip. Unload the truck. Do that research you need to do. Check the oil. Clean off the weird red mark some moron in Hatch scrawled on your passenger window. Do some more research. Mow the yard. No, the whole yard. Put away the stuff from the truck. Stare at your story if you want, but I'm tellin' you, you ain't writin' today.

Okay, go write the daily journal if it'll make you feel better.

And here I am. So still no Day 20 of writing. Tomorrow probably. Tomorrow almost certainly.

See you then.

Today's Writing
Fiction words: XXXX

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Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 45987
Day 20... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 0000
Total fiction words for the year..... 442400

August 6, 2015

The Day
Rolled out at 2. Not really sure why. Still tired and unmotivated.

Anyway, after a few hours of doing basically nothing, I went for a walk. That was good to the tune of just under 6 miles, so at least I got my blood pumping again. Yay. I guess.

Got back, made breakfast for myself and ate. Sat here to waste a little more time and then start this journal entry. Now to the shower, and then to the writing computer. Even if I do nothing but open it and stare, I'll do that for at least a few hours today. Ever get unmotivated? Not fun.

Anyway....

Topic of the Night: Pre-Partum Depression
Very short topic tonight. I've known since about a week before my trip (which started almost two weeks ago) that the current novel is going to end soon. I think that's part of my problem. I think I don't want it to end.

Yes, the story will continue in the next book, and yes, writing that one will be a great deal of fun. But I still hate seeing this one end. Ugh. Worst part of the writing process for me personally is coming to the end.

And I still don't understand those who actually celebrate finishing a story or a novel. I mean, if writing is fun, as it should be, why celebrate being done with it?

For me that would be like celebrating the end of a session of wild lovemaking. "Woohoo! It's over! Get the champagne!"

Uhhh, no. I just wanna grab a nap to sleep off the glow and then start the next one. And by "the next one," you know, I mean the next story or book.

Today's Writing
Not a lot, but some. I'm in the middle of the final big battle scene now, so when I finish that and then the

ending (the climax and the ending are not the same thing) I will have finished this one. Ugh.

So anyway, moving again with my writing. Probably no more foot dragging starting tomorrow.

Fiction words: 1541

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
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Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 45987
Day 20... 1541 words. Total words to date..... 47528

Total fiction words for the month..... 1541
Total fiction words for the year..... 443941

August 7, 2015

The Day
Rolled out at 2:40. Not quite as tired this morning.

Spent a short while doing emails, etc. to wake up, then turned to the writing computer. Did a short session of around 700 words, then took a walk. Only went just under 4 miles, but it was over rocky, sloping terrain so it was a good workout. Also took time to get a lot of pictures as well as a few videos. Still learning the video feature on my camera so I play with it now and then.

Downloading pics now (and writing this journal entry).

Fixed and ate breakfast, showered, checked and answered email, then read Dean's blog post. Interesting.

Topic of the Night: Climax Versus Ending

In yesterday's post I mentioned that all I have left to write on this book is the final big climax and the ending, and I mentioned that those are not the same thing.

No matter the story you're telling, no matter the length, the climax is just the climax. It isn't the ending. If you write the climax and then skip a blank line and write The End, you'll lose readers in droves for future books. What happened as the result of the climax? That is the ending.

The easiest example to use (as is often the case) is from a film. In Star Wars (the last of the original ones), the final big climactic scene was the one that culminated with the explosion of the Death Star and the connotation that the Empire was finished. I won't even begin to discuss how improbable it was that the Empire actually lost to a rag-tag band of misfits. US Revolutionary War anyone?

But that wasn't the ending. For the ending, the writer skipped ahead a few weeks and showed the big red carpet, with the princess (or queen, whatever) hanging medals on everyone within reach, including a big tawny carpet. Remember? That was the ending.

In another favorite film, the final in the original Lonesome Dove series, again the writer skipped ahead from the climax to have a nervous reporter say to Captain Call that he was a man of vision. At that point, Call mumbled "Yeah, one hell of a vision" sarcastically and stared off into space as the director paraded all his dead friends past him.

The climax is the climax. The ending is the part that lets the viewer (films) and the reader (books) know it's okay to get up and find something else to do. The story is over.

Finally, in a story like the one I'm currently writing (remember, I'm on the eighth book in the same story), the ending serves to let the reader know it's all right to find something else to do for now, but it also entices the reader to want to read the next book in the story.

And I hope to reach that point today, or maybe tomorrow.

We'll see.

Today's Writing
Okay. Good day of writing today.

After the initial session of around 700 this morning, I had three more good sessions, each about an hour long. So the big climax is done. Now I have only the denouement (ending) to wrap it up and lead into the next book. That should fall into place tomorrow.

Fiction words: 3503

Writing of The Battle of Tres Caballos (Book 8)
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Day 3..... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 9515
Day 4..... 1412 words. Total words to date..... 10927
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Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 45987

Day 20… 1541 words. Total words to date…… 47528
Day 21… 3503 words. Total words to date…… 51031

Total fiction words for the month……. 5044
Total fiction words for the year……. 447444

August 8, 2015

The Day
Rolled out right at 2. Like yesterday, I spent a short time on email and games to wake up. Then I turned to the writing computer and did a very short session of around 400 words to finish the big battle scene from yesterday. This is an extremely emotional scene. Whew.

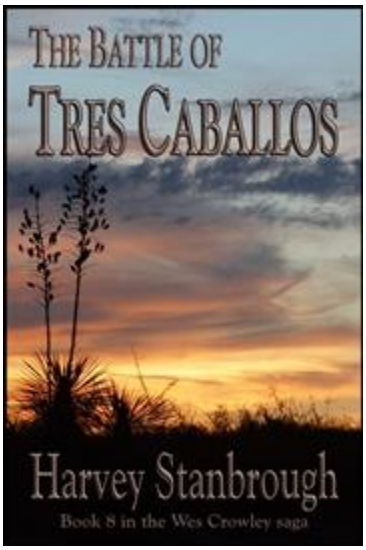
No walk this morning as I wasn't feeling well. Nothing serious, just blah.

Finally decided to hit Walmart early in the day to stock up on groceries. Got back by about 8:30, put stuff away, then fixed and ate breakfast. Checked and answered email again, then turned to the writing computer again and powered through to the end in two sessions, each of which was about an hour.

Some very interesting things happened in the last few thousand words. MAN I love my characters! They're never shy about throwing me a curve. Keeps it interesting. (As Ray Bradbury said, if you don't surprise yourself as a writer, how can you expect to surprise your readers?)

Then I came to write this post and finally remembered to check Dean's blog post. Again, interesting. Today he started an instruction book for writers called "How to Write Fiction Sales Copy." If you want to learn how to write blurbs, etc. (sales copy), I advise you to tune in to his blog for awhile and read the posts.

Anyway, I ran the spell-checker (that's my second draft) and then created a cover. (That's it over there on the right.) After that I published the book to Smashwords and Amazon for pre-orders. It will release officially on 1 October. If you'd care for a preview, please visit http://harveystanbrough.com/the-battle-of-tres-caballos. I think you'll enjoy the excerpt there. (grin)



Topic of the Night: Another Challenge Coming

When I went to Smashwords and Amazon today to publish The Battle of Tres Caballos, the process seemed very stiff and stilted. That was my fault, not the fault of the sites.

When I was writing a short story every week (and creating a cover and publishing it and combining the latest 5 or 10 stories in a collection and creating a cover and publishing it) I was a very busy camper. (grin) I was publishing something at least once a week, so I got in practice.

Now I'm rusty. I'm also old and cratchety (old and cratchety enough that I really like the word "cratchety"), so I'm rustier than I'd have been at say 60 or whatever.

So I think another self-challenge is on the horizon. I would LOVE for you (all of you or any of you) to join me in that challenge if you want, but more than likely I won't ask. I mean, if you wanna do it (or even a modified version of it), take a hint from Nike and Just Do It.

Okay, sorry for the abbreviated topic, but I'm pooped.

Today's Writing
Great day of writing today. The characters surprised me two or three times during the climax and ANOTHER two or three times during the ending. Incredible fun.

Fiction words: 2405

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Day 17... 1678 words. Total words to date..... 41469
Day 18... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 43274
Day 19... 2713 words. Total words to date..... 45987
Day 20... 1541 words. Total words to date..... 47528
Day 21... 3503 words. Total words to date..... 51031
Day 22... 2405 words. Total words to date..... 53436 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 7449
Total fiction words for the year..... 449849

August 9, 2015

The Day
Rolled out right at 2:30. Turned on the coffee water (I use Kava, which is instant but no acid), then went into the office.

I opened the writing computer first thing and wrote an opening sentence that was slapping me around as I was waking up. I won't count those words unless I work on that potential story later today. Then email etc. then to this journal entry.

I might take a day off today. I want to think about my upcoming challenge. What it's going to be. How often it will reset.

Wrote the Topic of the Night (below) and then took a walk along a broad wash near St. David. Wanted to see whether the recent rains had solidified the sandy bottom and it had. So that will be good for walks until the four wheelers tear the snot out of it again.

Yeah, I know not everyone likes to walk, but I don't know why they can't reuse the same tracks coming out that they used going in. When they tear up the entire bottom, it makes for very difficult walking or

hiking.

Soon a side trip to Sierra Vista for some cat stuff and probably to look around for awhile. Then back here for whatever awaits.

No writing today. I'm just gonna blow off the rest of the day and start fresh tomorrow on something.

Topic of the Night: One of Heinlein's Rules Revisited
Just as a quick reference, the rules are

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must refrain from rewriting.
4. You must put your work on the market (publish it or submit it for publication) so readers (or editors/publishers) can buy it.
5. You must leave it on the market (leave it published or resubmit rejected manuscripts) so readers can continue to buy it (or so different editors/publishers have a chance to buy it).

Dean Wesley Smith has often said his biggest failure in following Heinlein's Rules, especially in his early days, was Rule 4.

Most would-be writers have trouble with 1 or 2 or 3. They're still inundated with all the myths they've been taught (writing is hard, it's work, it's drudgery, etc.) so it becomes much easier to talk about writing than to actually write. They've also never been taught to push down the fear of rejection surging within them.

So instead of finishing what they're writing, they start a new piece, then another and another. If they don't finish a work in progress, they can't send it off and risk suffering rejection.

Or they do finish. But the same fear of rejection, coupled this time with the myth (and LIE) that they must rewrite, keeps them rewriting and editing and polishing. Because again, if they're rewriting, they aren't finished and they can't send off their work and risk rejection.

I understand how would-be writers can fall victim to those first three rules. Considering all the (ahem) *crap* we're taught almost constantly about writing, it's absolutely amazing that anything has been published EVER.

But I never quite understood how a writer could be tripped up by Rule 4.

Now Dean has said repeatedly that what tripped him up on Rule 4 was the same fear. If he didn't submit his work, he wouldn't risk rejection.

But he also said he enjoyed WRITING. He enjoyed the storytelling. He has been a writing-into-the-dark type ever since he found Heinlein's Rules and another SF writer told him to "Dare to be bad." And ever since the wisdom of those concepts sank in, writing has been much more important to him than publishing what he wrote. To some degree, even in today's brave new world of publishing, he's still that way.

And I finally understand it.

Yesterday, I finished The Battle of Tres Caballos. It was the eighth book in the Wes Crowley saga. But as I finished it, spell checked it and published it for pre-publication orders to Smashwords and Amazon, I realized I wasn't worried so much about when it will come out. Or even whether it will come out.

Now, don't get me wrong. I WILL release it in both ebook and paper, but my priorities have shifted. I used to long for others to read and enjoy what I had written. Now I just want to write. I'll release this one mostly because there is a small cadre of readers who enjoy the series and want to know what Wes is up to next.

But I have to be honest here. I'm not suffering under any delusions of grandeur. I'm not buying for a second that my novels or stories are "important" to anyone other than myself.

When I was a child, I read or heard somewhere that if you want to gauge your true importance, fill a pail about 3/4 full with water. Then stick your fist in the pail. Note the water level.

Then take your fist out of the pail and notice how little the water level changed. There you go.

That's how much my stories would be missed if I stopped putting them out there.

The good thing is, that's a completely freeing concept. When I write, it's strictly so I can enjoy running through a story with the characters. Believe me, it doesn't get any better than that.

Today's Writing
No writing today.
Fiction words: XXXX

Writing of XXXXX ()

Day 1..... XXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 7449
Total fiction words for the year..... 449849

August 10, 2015

The Day
This post is longer than usual, but you wanna read it, I promise. (grin)

Rolled out late this morning at 3:30. Weird. right at 2:30. Things are different when I get up later than usual, especially a whole hour later than usual. Messes up part of the routine.

Barely had time to wake up before I had to let the pets out. Then I started getting ready for my walk, so no writing early.

Good walk, although short at just under 4 miles. Then I had a shower and breakfast and came here to open the journal entry.

Still thinking about my personal goals (writing and otherwise) and putting things away after painting my office and squaring away things from the trip in addition to getting back into writing. There are also some big changes coming up in my life, so that's on my mind some too.

Nothing's easy, eh? Then again, if it were easy, how boring would that be?

Topic of the Night: Walking and Writing

No, they aren't in any way the same thing, but they are the same process.

In walking you just put one foot in front of the other. Those steps become a tenth of a mile, then two-tenths and so on. And those tenths become a mile, then two, and so on.

Moreover, walking doesn't require conscious thought. Your nervous system and your muscles know what to do. They, aided by the gyroscope that is (I guess) your middle ear, act in concert to propel you, usually in the direction you want to go.

In fact, walking is endlessly more pleasurable if you DON'T give it conscious thought. I've gotten considerably stronger, improved my breathing and lost more weight more quickly when I was "just walking" than when I walked "as a workout," "trying" to improve my health. Seriously.

Letting go and Just Walking is easy. Just let your subconscious take over and do its thing while you enjoy the view.

When I just walk for the pure pleasure of it, I call it "touring." It isn't a workout. I'm simply enjoying the rhythm of walking.

I'm also noticing in greater detail whatever scents are on the air and whatever sights are (slowly) passing by to either side. If I see something interesting, I stop and investigate. If I see a great photo, I stop and take it.

And when I walk like that, I go a lot farther with a lot less stress than when I "try" to work out by walking. In fact, "just walking" is so stress free that if I begin to feel fatigued I think, *Wait a minute. It's just walking. There's no rush, no hurry.*

Plus there's no rule that says I can't sit down for a few minutes before I get up and continue.

Okay, so what about writing?

Well, let's draw some parallels. In writing you just put one word in front of the other. Those words become phrases and clauses and sentences. Those become paragraphs and scenes and stories or chapters. Those become a book, either a novel, a novella or a collection. Cool, eh?

Moreover, writing doesn't require conscious thought. Your conscious mind has absorbed all it needs to know to write a story at your current skill level. That knowledge has seeped into your subconscious, and your subconscious has been telling stories since long before you learned how to form the letters of the alphabet.

In fact, writing is endlessly more pleasurable if you DON'T give it conscious thought. I've written considerably better stories, improved my writing rhythms and storytelling skills a lot more quickly when I was "just writing" that when I was writing as a workout, "trying" to perfect my skills. Seriously.

Letting go and Just Writing is easy. Just let your subconscious take over and do its thing while you enjoy moving through the story with your characters.

When I just write for the pure pleasure of it, I call it "playing." It isn't work. I'm simply enjoying the settings and the characters and their reactions to the setting and the situation. In other words, I'm enjoying the rhythms of writing.

My characters cause me to notice in greater detail whatever scents and sounds are on the air and whatever sights are passing by to either side. If they see something interesting, they investigate and I write it down. When they show me a great scene, I write it.

And when I write like that, the writing goes a lot smoother with a lot less stress than when I "try" to write with my conscious mind. In fact, "just writing" is so stress free that if I begin to feel fatigued I think, *Wait a minute. My characters and I are just telling a story. There's no rush, no hurry.*

Plus there's no rule that says I can't take a break for a few minutes. My characters know I'm not as young as most of them are. They don't mind.

Imagine the stress involved if I tried to force my characters to say and do certain things. Ugh. How can that possibly be any fun at all? Well, it can't.

Today's Writing

With all the stuff going on that I talked about under "The Day" above, I did finally get some writing done. When I sat down at my writing 'puter I was still thinking about setting some new goals and so on. But one phrase kept slipping into my head: Book Nine.

My subconscious wants to continue Wes' story, so for at least part of my writing, that's what I'm gonna do. 'Cause seriously, only a complete and utter moron ignores the subconscious when it's time to tell a story. (grin) And I am a moron, but I'm not so good as to consider myself "complete and utter."

So I wrote two short sessions on Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga. Not bad at all given all the background stuff I have to do at the beginning of each book. And this one is bringing back two big characters from earlier in the series. (grin)

Anyway, all of that led me to set a goal.

I started what turned out to be Book One of the saga on October 25, 2014. My goal is to have finished Books 9 and 10 in the saga on or before October 24, 2015.

I also realized recently that when I was writing a new short story every week, that process invigorated my writing in other ways as well. So I'm starting that self-challenge again, and it's perfect timing. Today is Monday. Before next Monday I will have written and published a new short story. This is in addition to whatever I get finished on Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga.

Should any of you want to join me in this challenge, let me know. I'll do anything I can to help, except writing them for you. (grin)

Fiction words: 1511

Writing of As Yet Untitled (Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga)
Day 1..... 1111 words. Total words to date..... 1511

Total fiction words for the month..... 8960
Total fiction words for the year..... 451360

August 11, 2015

The Day
Rolled out closer to 2:30 this morning. Still tired from the trip, I think.

Well, I woke up in the mood to "take some air," as we used to say, and I set out to go for 6 miles.

But just as I reached the two mile mark, I realized the large, severe storm I'd been watching to the south

was closing on me. Just so you know, I DID look at that lying weather radar before I set out. Nothing threatening on it.

So anyway, I called it a half-walk at two miles and headed for the pickup, two miles back the way I'd come.

Now I'll cut this tale short. Once it got wound up, the rain was ice cold, horizontal and stinging. Had about a mile and a half of that, though it finally settled down for the final two tenths of a mile or so.

I was drenched pretty much to the bone and exhausted. Then again, it was an experience very few people have had. So there's that.

Overall it was like watching your great-grandmother take a bath. It was really wet, but otherwise it wasn't all that interesting. (grin)

Back to the house, a shower, a hot breakfast, then writing this. Now to chill for a few, then to the writing 'puter.

Other things ate up part of the day, plus I'm really dragging. The storm took it out of me today.

And I checked my story of the week and found I didn't have one posted for next week yet. So I did that. Just finished. Now I'll turn to the writing 'puter to play with Wes and the guys for awhile.

Not getting much in the way of comments on the stories, so I might cut that story of the week stuff off. A little less to do, more time to write.

Topic of the Night: No topic tonight. Except seriously, if you aren't going to Dean's site, he's running a great series over there on how to write sales copy for fiction (cover blurbs, descriptions, etc.).

BUT DON'T take everything he says for gospel. Just visit the site and glean what you can, what's useful to you.

Today's Writing
Worked a little on Book 9, but not a lot.
Fiction words: 1009

Writing of As Yet Untitled (Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga)
Day 1..... 1511 words. Total words to date..... 1511
Day 2..... 1009 words. Total words to date..... 2520

Total fiction words for the month..... 9569
Total fiction words for the year..... 451969

August 12, 2015

The Day
Rolled out a little after 3 again this morning.

No walking today, that's for sure. Tomorrow morning should be a good walk again if it isn't raining.

Spent the better part of the morning rearranging my office. I got rid of some stuff and placed some stuff where I want it. The rest I just stored in the corner of my office until I'm in the mood to go through it. At any rate, it's all out of the living room, where it's been ever since my wife painted my office. Ugh.

Checked out Dean's site. He's still posting a new chapter every day on his next nonfiction book, How to Write Fiction Sales Copy. Invaluable stuff, and he's posting it free. Later he'll take down the posts and sell the book, so get it now if you want it.

I turned to the writing 'puter a couple times during the morning, but there was nothing there. I think Wes wants a breather, so I'm gonna back off him for awhile. I'll return to the saga later if Wes chooses to share anymore of his life story with me. If not, well, then the saga will have ended with Book 8, The Battle of Tres Caballos. Either way is fine. We'll see.

I'm not overly concerned. Since I started the first novel on October 25, 2014, I've written eight books in that series, totaling 323,478 words. During that same span of time, I also wrote another novel and a novella, totaling 79,199 words. And the short stories I wrote (only since October 25) total 131,377 words. So that ain't too shabby. Since October 25, 2014, I've written 534,054 words of published fiction.

Over a half-million words since I wrote the first word on my first novel. I'm a happy camper. (grin)

Plus I compiled and published thirteen collections of short fiction. And designed 60 or thereabouts book covers. (grin)

I've been a very busy boy for the past almost ten months. (grin) But I don't know, maybe now I'm gonna slow down a little. Or maybe not. Shrug.

Remember, I practice Writing Off Into the Dark. I never want to direct my characters, force them to say and do things. I want to have fun. I want to run through the story WITH them. I want to simply be there when they say or do things, when things happen to them, so I can write those things on the page.

So for now, I'm going to enjoy writing short stories, get caught up on publishing a few collections, and maybe wander off into another novel in another genre.

Or if Wes decides he's ready to continue, we'll continue.

For now, I'm going to chuck what I've already written on Book 8. It's only less than three hours' work, and it isn't wasted. It brought me to the point of knowing it wasn't the right opening.

Topic of the Night: Knowing When to Hang On, When to Let Go

Remember Kenny Rogers? He was a singer, initially with The First Edition where he "slipped on a cloud and fell eight miles high" and then "tore [his] mind on a jagged sky." And all of that led him to say he had "just stopped in to see what condition [his] condition was in."

But later he was a solo country-western singer and then starred as The Gambler. And in a combination of those roles, he once sang, "You got to know when to hold 'em [and] when to fold 'em."

Yeah, I know that's a long way to go to set up a topic of the night, but I like nostalgia.

Anyway, regarding Kenny's advice, that's all well and good, but HAVING to know when to hold 'em is one thing. But knowing HOW to know when to hold 'em is something else entirely.

I mean, it's a good idea to know HOW to know whether to hold 'em, fold 'em, or just chuck the whole shebang into the river and start over.

This is an important concept in writing.

So how do I know when to let go of a novel or story or series and when to hang on?

Simple. If I feel like I'm having to "think" my way through it, I back away. Period. The conscious mind never did anything good for literature. I take a break (from a few minutes to an hour or more) and then come back.

I put my fingers on the keyboard. If nothing comes, I let it go. I fold 'em.

If words come, any words, I hang on for the ride and let the characters lead me through the story.

After you learn to trust your subconscious, it's precisely that simple and it's precisely that easy.

Today's Writing
No writing today. I'm taking the rest of today off, period. Fresh start tomorrow with all possibilities open to me.

Fiction words: XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 9569
Total fiction words for the year..... 451969

August 13, 2015

The Day
If you read this earlier, I've edited it.

Rolled out a little before 3 this morning.

Had a fairly good walk, mostly asphalt, with some heart and lung-pumping hills. Only a little over 4.5 miles, but the hills made it a good workout too.

Had a trip to Sierra Vista for groceries and cat stuff and a new coffee maker. It was early afternoon before I got back and haven't written a word of fiction today. That's all right.

Checked out Dean's site. I recommend it. http://deanwesleysmith.com

NOTE: In Addition To the new chapter every day on his next nonfiction book, How to Write Fiction Sales Copy, he's also posting his daily blog. It is very similar to this one, but better. You'll find the daily blog post just below the new chapter. So when you get there, scroll down if you haven't been. Really good stuff, complete with a separate topic of the night. Today's topic was "Massive Deadlines," in which he talks more about this wonderful new world of publishing.

Go. Read. Learn stuff.

Topic of the Night: Shutting Down

Before I edited it, this topic was "Shutting Down, Perhaps." I've decided to remove the possibility and make it a fact.

Last night here I talked about knowing when to hang on and when to let go. I was talking about a particular piece of writing.

But that goes to things like blog posts also.

I've been posting to this particular blog (The Journal) ALMOST every day since October 19, 2014. To date, that's 171,275 nonfiction words.

Well, 171,275 nonfiction words is a bunch of words. Seriously. And that's only on THIS blog. It doesn't take into account my regular blog post, which comes out every ten days and most often contains around a thousand words per post.

Thing is, for this blog (The Journal) I currently have only 30 subscribers. Not good, considering the effort I put into this thing every day. (grin)

Of those 30 subscribers, most of the time not quite half (13) even open the post to read it. That means slightly over half of the subscribers are seeing the email in their inbox and deleting it without even opening it. Talk about a vote of no confidence. (grin)

One of the main reasons I started this was to share my personal journey as a prolific professional fiction writer. I hoped it would help motivate others to write. But apparently now, over half of the subscribers aren't interested, so why bother detailing my daily journey as a writer? (shrug)

Another reason was to keep myself accountable and watch my own publications grow. I've done that. And frankly, I can keep the numbers myself without posting them to a daily blog. I think I'm gonna ask my friend Dawn to help me create a spreadsheet like hers (or maybe just copy hers myself). (grin)

So I'm shutting down this Daily Journal blog. Yeah, I was just considering shutting it down, but I'm gonna do it.

In a few cases, at least, I know it has served its intended purpose, motivating other writers. If you're one of those, I'm happy for you. If you aren't, well, sorry I failed you.

Okay, so if you are reading this and you are NOT signed up for my main blog (Pro-Writers Blog)—and if you want to stay in touch—I urge you to sign up. For your convenience, you can simply click this link: http://eepurl.com/pQT6f. Then follow the directions.

This will be the final edition of this blog, The Journal. Maybe I'll see you over at the other blog. Until then, take care.

Today's Writing: Nothing today except this blog post.

Total fiction words for the month..... 9569
Total fiction words for the year..... 451969

NO POSTS FOR AUGUST 14 – 18

August 19, 2015

The Day
Well I'm back. I decided to fire up this journal again.

When I shut down this blog 11 days ago, I wrote, "over half of the subscribers aren't interested, so why bother detailing my daily journey as a writer?"

What a stupid question. And the answer is "Um, well, because I was doing it more to hold myself

accountable than for any other reason. And the half who ARE interested make it worthwhile." So my apologies to those of you who were/are interested.

When I shut it down I even wrote that I could "keep the numbers myself."

Yeah, well, I could, maybe, but I didn't. And I won't. I know me, and that's something I won't do.

Anyway, since then I realized that stopping this journal was stopping part of my writing ritual, and that's just insane. More on that in the Topic of the Night below.

Recent History
I haven't written any new fiction to speak of since August 8 when I finished The Battle of Tres Caballos. I piddled around, wrote about 2500 words on Book 9, then tossed it. I also started two short stories, then tossed both of those openings as well.

Of course, today is only August 19. That's a break of only 11 days, inclusive. But that 11 days seems like a world-ending eternity. Especially coming, as it does, so soon after ANOTHER break of 11 days that spanned my trip to Indiana. What is it with me and 11-day breaks? Ugh.

So here we go. I'll read back over a few of my journal posts and absorb some of my own advice. Then I'll read back over some other stuff to get the feeling of writing again. Then I'll set a few goals (at least a couple of those will automatically re-set) and start writing again.

Okay, so I rolled out a little after 3 this morning. Did little or nothing the first few hours of the day, except thinking. I did a lot of that.

No walk today. Ate a good breakfast, then came here to put down a few of those thoughts.

Topic of the Night: Enduring the Perfect Storm
I just endured (and barely survived) my own personal perfect storm. All within a fairly short time period,

- For some inane reason I intentionally ended a streak of writing a short story every week. That streak had lasted for 66 weeks and 71 short stories; then
- I finished the eighth novel in a saga; and then
- I stopped publishing this journal, which was holding me accountable to others and myself.

Each of those is an inertia killer.

Each of those sends the wrong message to the subconscious. And as you know, the care and feeding of the subconscious is all-important to a guy who writes off into the dark.

By ending the short story streak, I effectively discarded a goal that re-set itself every week. No goal = no incentive. Discarding that goal also helped dilute the importance of meeting my daily goal of writing 3000 new publishable words of fiction per day.

By finishing the novel and not immediately starting the next one (or even a short story since I no longer "have" to write a story every week) I also at least dampened any inertia I had built up.

And by ceasing publication of this journal I was no longer holding myself accountable.

So no real goals, no writing inertia and no accountability— Seriously? No wonder my subconscious decided to take a vacation for awhile. It was probably out looking for a real writer. (grin)

Gotta change all of that. I've already fired up the journal again. Now I'll set new goals and get back to having fun telling stories.

Okay, I almost forgot I had to drive into Benson to do routine blood tests for my doctor. I'm back, so I'll finish this now. It's just after 10:30 in the morning at this point.

So here are my new goals:

At least 3000 words of new publishable fiction per day— Same goal, reestablished, reaffirmed.

At least one new story every week— I'm taking up the story a week personal challenge again. Besides helping with discipline, it's a great deal of fun. As I mentioned earlier, if anyone would care to join me, just email me to let me know. Either way, I look forward to it. I'll post the new story (or one of them) each week on the website under the Free Short Story of the Week tab.

Finish two more novels before October 25— I'm only setting this as a goal because October 24th will be one year from the date I started writing my very first novel. If I can pull this off, I will have written 11 novels and a novella during that twelve months. This is NOT a major goal. Just something interesting to keep me on track, and there's absolutely no reason I can't do it.

I'm (re)starting Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga today. I won't be using anything I wrote from the earlier opening. I was gonna start tomorrow morning, but that's just my old conscious mind trying to drop a cloud over everything.

Okay, so on to the writing. I'll fill in the blanks below later.

Today's Writing
Finally got my priorities straight as I detailed above.

Before I began writing I did some preliminary stuff. Came up with twenty-two new character names (all Mexican males and one newlywed female) and assigned six new jobs. All of that took a little over an hour.

Then between noon(ish) and about 3:40 (as I write this) I had three good writing sessions during which I knocked out the word count you see below. Can't tell you how good it feels to be back on track. Is there a better job in the entire universe? I don't think so.

Fiction Words: 3213

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 12782
Total fiction words for the year..... 455182

August 20, 2015

The Day
Rolled out at 2:30 this morning. I started this journal entry over a cup of French vanilla cappucino. Yeah, it's a weakness. Nice to have every now and then.

Okay, now it's 4 a.m. (after I wrote the Topic of the Night below) so time to release the babies (a hyper nervous chihuahua and two lady cats who relish the savory flavor of rare chihuahua meat, he thinks) so they can run and play. Let the day begin. (grin)

I already know I'm going for a walk this morning, so I'll piddle around until then. I'll leave about 5 a.m. When I get back I'll shower and change clothes, then write. Sure feels good to be back in the saddle alongside Wes.

Got back from a good 4 mile walk in a sandy bottomed arroyo (good workout). After a shower and changing clothes, I realized I had to run (well, drive) to the grocery store. So I got that done, then came back here, put on the first of two loads of laundry I want to get done today.

Then finally I turned to the writing 'puter. Trudging today, but it's still great to be back. To steal a line from a bumper sticker about fishing, even the worst day of writing is better than the best day at work. (grin)

Topic of the Night: Productivity as a Writer

I've received several comments recently from writers who feel disappointed in themselves when they can't "keep up" with me in their own writing. I do understand because I'd like very much to write at what Dean Smith calls "Pulp Speed."

Pulp Speed is at least one million words of publishable fiction in a year. Chances are I'll never pull that off. But if I don't, that's all right.

The point behind me posting my numbers is NOT to challenge you to keep up with me. Believe me, compared to some writers out there (and to ALL the old pulp writers) I'm slow.

But I post my numbers here only to show you that even though I set goals, I sometimes fail to reach them. And That's All Right.

I want you to understand that failing to reach a goal is not necessarilly a bad thing. I want you to know it's entirely possible to "fail to success."

My own long-term goal on January 1 of this year was to reach 1,095,000 words by December 31. I won't make it. In fact I won't get anywhere near it.

But if I hit 600,000 or 700,000 words by then, I'll take it. I will have failed, but I will have failed to success.

Here are the numbers:

My daily writing goal is 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day.

If I hit that goal exactly, and if I do that for 365 days in a row, I will have written 1,095,000 words in a year. Over a million words.

But I don't. My average (arithmetic mean) before this horrible month of August was around 2500 words per day. And even if I hit 2500 words per day every day for 365 days in a row, I'd still fall short of my million words at 912,500 words.

Amazing the difference 500 words a day (a half hour per day) can make, isn't it?

But I also realize a lot of you have jobs or careers or other interests, so let's talk about your own personal reality.

If you want to increase your productivity as a writer, do this:

- Step One. Figure out how much writing time you have per day. The best way to do that is keep a journal. Break your waking-hours day into quarter-hour or half-hour increments, then write down what you were doing during each increment. (If you were watching a football game for example, that knocks out several increments in a row.)
  Keep your journal for at least three days. A week is better. Don't cheat. Nobody's gonna see it but you. This should show you when you can carve out time to write.
- Step Two. Figure out how many publishable words you can write in an hour. Hint: Don't "think" your way through every phrase and sentence. That isn't how good writing happens. Bradbury himself once said nothing good in literature ever came from conscious thought. Instead, sit down at the keyboard, put your fingers on the keys, and Just Write What Comes. Then write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence. Don't worry about where it's all going. Just Write.

Note: I write about 1000 words per hour. That probably sounds like a lot, but it's only 17 words per minute. That leaves a lot of time for staring off into space, don't you think? (grin) Seriously, if you aren't writing 700+ words per hour, check in with yourself. What are you doing during that hour?

- Step Three. When you know how often you can write and how many words per hours you can get on the page, don't let your conscious mind (fear) make excuses for you. Sit down and write. I'll do a topic on fear another time.
- Step Four. (I recently re-learned this one the hard way.) Set Goals. And be dogged in your determination to achieve them. I'll write more about goal setting in another topic soon, but for now, here are a few tips:
    - Be specific. Don't say you'll write a novel. That's like saying you'll eat an elephant. It's an overwhelming thought. Instead say you'll write 1,000 words (about one hour) per day. Every day.
    - Set goals that automatically re-set. If you say you'll write 1000 words every day, that goal re-sets every morning when you get out of bed. If you miss a day or fall short one day, the next day you still have to write only 1000 words to hit your goal.
    - Tell people about your goals. This will help you hold yourself accountable. Tell your writing group or friends. Don't tell people who will downplay what you're doing or who will not support you.
    - Set up a streak. How many days in a row can you write 1000 words per day? The longer you go, the more power the streak has and the less likely you are to break it. Streaks feed goals and goals feed streaks. Try it. You'll like it.

If you decide to write two days per week or five days per week, you can still set up a streak. How many weeks can you go without missing your assigned days?

Share your results with me in the comments section if you want. I'll always be supportive. Yes, even if you write 4000 words per day and shoot past me like I'm stapled to a tree. (grin)

Now let's look at numbers.

If you write 1,000 (one hour) words per day, and you write only five days per week, that's still 5,000 words per week. That's 20,000 words per month, 60,000 words per quarter, and 260,000 words per year.

If you choose to take off two weeks for vacation every year, that's still 250,000 words per year.

But what if you can only write a half-hour per day, five days per week?

Run the numbers. That's 500 words per day, 2500 words per week, 10,000 words per month. It's 30,000 words per quarter, and 130,000 words per year unless you take that two week vacation. Then it's "only" 125,000 words.

Finally, realize that if you miss your goal, absolutely nothing will happen. It will simply re-set and you can go for it again.

So there you go. If you need help with any of this, please let me know. I'd be more than happy to help. I'm not kidding.

Today's Writing

It's perfect that I picked Productivity as the Topic of the Night above. And it's perfect that I mentioned that failing to meet goals is all right.

Today, like yesterday, my daily goal was to write 3,000 publishable words of fiction. I failed miserably.

Now, I'm in that stage of the novel in which I have to nitpick my way through it, making sure I get the names right, making sure I include enough backstory so the novel stands alone, but also adding enough new stuff to keep the story moving for those who have read the entire saga from the beginning. It's a rough balance to walk.

So that's my excuse, and it's a valid one. Still, I know me. And I know there's no reason I couldn't have done that (very slow writing) AND still met my goal.

I just didn't. (shrug)

But that's all right. The novel is still farther along today than it was when I got up this morning.

And tomorrow morning around 2 or 3 a.m. I'm gonna roll outta the rack and have a brand spanking new daily goal: 3,000 words. And that's what keeps me going. (grin)

Fiction Words: 1046

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 13828
Total fiction words for the year..... 456228

August 21, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 2 this morning. Checked email and saw that several revised/rebranded covers and Book 8 of the series were ready for proofing. So I got my coffee and started that process. Finished an hour or so later. Still amazes me that I have eight books out in that saga. Who'd'a thunk it?

Last night I figured I wouldn't walk today. I would use my early morning hours to get a jump start on this novel. I would finish the slug work I mentioned yesterday and get into it. Okay, so that means no walk, no interruptions. Just writing, punctuated with occasional breaks.

Here begins the section on The Best Laid Plans.

Not going to walk today, I made an early breakfast (hash browns, eggs, sausage and dry rye toast). And

one extra cup of coffee.

I'd already let the ladies outside. No sooner was my breakfast on the plate, cut up and all mushed together, than coyotes started howling. Coyotes have a really odd sense of humor, and impeccable timing.

Roughly an instant later, my little girl siamese was standing at the door separating the kitchen from the dining room asking politely to come inside until the coyotes stopped being rude. Good girl.

I let her in, then put my breakfast plate on the cabinet and covered it with a pan lid. I grabbed a flashlight, slipped on my flip-flops and went looking for the other girl, who is blacker than night and not easy to find even with a flashlight.

I circled the house twice. Yes, inside a fence, but the fence surrounds about a third of an acre and is filled with natural desert brush. You know that passage in the bible about wailing and gnashing of teeth? Yeah. It was like that.

Halfway through the third circuit I finally found her. In the dining room. At the door. Waiting to come in. Acting as if she'd been right there all along. Okay, good girl. Whatever.

Ate my cold breakfast, played two games of spider solitaire (the game should be outlawed), then answered some more email. And here I am, at 6:30 a.m., doing this and about to turn to the writing 'puter for the first time. I'll write the topic of the night later.

I'm going to try to keep better tabs on my writing/break habits. This is probably not innately interesting, but I'm hoping it will help me take a break every hour or so. Those of you who have been following this for awhile know I've been working on the concept of taking a break every hour or so for awhile now.

By the way, I received a nice acceptance email for a short story I sent to The Scribe, the magazine of the St. Louis Writers Guild. The magazine is free and has a lot of neat stuff in it. If you'd like a copy, visit Smashwords and download it in PDF, .mobi (Kindle) or .epub (all other readers).

By the way, the story in this issue is the very first short story I wrote by completely trusting my subconscious and writing off into the dark. If you read it, be sure to read the About the Author blurb afterward too. I think you'll get a kick out of it.

Oof. MAJOR lightning strike on my position. Literally the loudest, sharpest sound I've ever heard. Not exaggerating. Man, that'll get your ticker pumping. And no rain.

Took a break to hit the PO, then back here for lunch and a few minutes doing nothing, then back to the novel.

Topic of the Night: Writing Off Into the Dark

Very briefly, when you do this, you're simply trusting your subconscious to tell the story. Believe me, it knows MUCH better than you do what needs to go into the story. Just trust it. And yes, saying that is much simpler than doing it. But once you learn to trust it, You Will See Miracles in your characters, settings, stories.

All of this was prompted by a comment from Bonnie, who complained that the killer in her WIP was not the person she thought it should be.

In my response, I reminded her to just write the next sentence, then write the next sentence, etc. and eventually the situation and the characters would reveal to her who the killer actually is.

And since it will be a surprise to her, it will also be a surprise to the reader. True dat.

Bradbury even once said if you can't surprise yourself as a writer, how in the world do you expect to surprise the reader.

So again, learn to trust your subconscious. Nothing good in literature ever came out of the conscious mind.

Sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and just write the next sentence. And above all else, have fun. (grin)

I encourage you to read the exchange between Bonnie and me in the comments on yesterday's post.

Today's Writing

Wrote at several different times today for various lengths of time. Also did a lot of reading for various reasons. Came up with the name of an important horse, for example. That took close to an hour.

His name is Vuelo, by the way, which means Flight. He comes from the sacred cliffs (los acantilados sagrados) so it's a good name for him. But it took awhile to get there. So that's how much of the writing day went, which translates to another day with a short word count.

I took several short breaks during the day, so no fatigue from writing. But I did drag myself down with "necessary" things I had to do for the story.

This is going to be great fun for me when I break through the opening several pages. Looking forward to that.

Fiction Words: 1858

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 15686
Total fiction words for the year..... 458086

August 22, 2015

The Day

Ray Bradbury's birthday. Ray Bradbury is the guy who knew at 12 years old what it took me 62 years to learn. Glad I didn't wait until I was 63. Blessings, Mr. Bradbury. And thank you so much.

Rolled out at 3 this morning. Checked email, got my coffee and had to go run off a bunch of coyotes. Ugh. No walk again today. Just writing again today.

Listen, if you're publishing your own stuff through your own publishing company, check out https://draft2digital.com/.

I wrote a new short story today. When I went to publish it to Smashwords, for the first time EVER (153

books) my story didn't convert to any format at Smashwords. I nuked it, tried again, and it still didn't convert, which tells me it pretty much has to be their problem. So I sent them an email to that effect.

Then I popped over to D2D. I'd heard about it before, but hadn't tried it. All within about a half-hour, I signed up for an account, uploaded my book and cover, and it was published in PDF, .mobi (Kindle) and .epub (everything else). It was just that quick.

And the quality is incredible.

In my opinion, you still need to do some basic formatting (or have it done) but the service itself is great. D2D does not have their own online store, but they do distribute to Apple iBooks, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Inktera, Scribd, Tolino, and Oyster. These are all individual bookstores, and some of them have subsidiaries. I'm going with D2D from now on for these venues.

I'll also continue to publish with Amazon KDP (but not Select, not exclusively) and with Smashwords mostly for their online store.

Now for a break, then back to writing.

Topic of the Night: Write What Scares You

Stephen King advises writers to "write what scares you." Sounds right to me.

Bear in mind, this isn't just for horror writers. The good writer will evoke emotions from the reader. The stronger the better.

Now when I say write what scares you, I don't mean the "they're only zombies so I know it isn't real" kind of scary.

I mean you're tied up so you can't intervene, your eyelids are sliced off so you can't close your eyes, and you're forced to watch as an intruder uses garden shears to lop off the leg, just above the ankle, of a two year old child.

The intruder looks at you, sneers, then turns back to the baby again.

The child, wide eyed, screaming, automatically reaches down to grab the stump and— Oh! Oh no! No! *Snip!* Her little hand and arm are gone halfway to the elbow.

Wider eyes. Wider mouth. Louder screams.

Just when you thought louder screams weren't possible.

Notice that you don't have to "imagine" the child's eyes stretched wide in disbelieving horror. You can see them, can't you? And you don't have to imagine the screams either, do you?

And I'm just messin' around here, givin' you a f'rinstance.

Now, y'know those coyotes I mentioned before? I have nightmares sometimes about a song dog carrying off my baby girl. Seriously, nightmares. Obviously, that's something that scares me.

So following King's advice, I wrote a very similar scene in a short story called "A Natural Study of the Scream."

Now I'm just enough of a scientist that I actually noticed, writing that scene in that story created an odd, almost paradoxical sensation. First, it was easy to write. I would have thought it would be difficult to put on paper, but it wasn't. It was easy. The writing almost raced away without me.

But it also left me trembling, physically. I was upset to the point that I had to pour a couple fingers of Jameson's to sooth it away. That was the first drink of alcohol I'd had in a very long time.

Writing that scene in that story was an experience. One I both dread and will most definitely repeat.

Because that's good writing.

Today's Writing

Wrote for a while on Book 9, still struggling with tight stuff and otherwise getting started.

Left that for awhile and wrote the first new story of my challenge. I took a brief break, came back, sat down and wrote Pete & Repeat. Then I skipped a couple lines and just started writing whatever came through my fingertips. MAN that feels good!

It will publish under the Free Short Story of the Week tab on Monday morning. Felt good to create a new story and a new cover. And the story was FUN. Read it. You'll like it. No garden shears or anything. (grin)

Feeling a little under the weather and a lot of things up in the air right now. Hard to get settled in. I got a little done on the novel, but not a lot. It's coming. Stay tuned. (grin)

Fiction Words: 2685

Writing of "Pete & Repeat" (story of the week)
Day 1..... 1662 words. Total words to date..... 1662 words (done)

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 18371
Total fiction words for the year..... 460771

August 23, 2015

The Day

Rolled out at 3 this morning. Still feeling a little under the weather – ulcer stuff – and then padding through the living room, I was hit by a wood scorpion. Fortunately he caught me on the outside of the left heel and apparently hit a callus.

Either that or I've developed a tolerance for things that sting. Fire and intense pain for about a half-minute, then a very small, dull and subsiding ache for another five minutes, then nothing. I am SO lucky.

Sadly, the scorpion did not fare as well once I found my sandals and a flashlight.

Still, kudos to the little dude for being willing to attack something that's like a b'jillion times his size. I'll never quite understand why they get that really quizzical look on their face just after you smash 'em. Like "How in the world did you do that?"

Anyway, as befitting a tough little dude, I gave him the closest thing I could arrange to burial at sea.

Checked email, got my coffee and started in combining two spreadsheets. One contained info on all my electronic publications, and the other was print only. Took close to an hour, but I got new columns added to the larger one and the info transferred over. Now it's all in one place. More on keeping records in the Topic of the Night.

No walk again today. Just administrative stuff and writing.

Okay, it's now 10:30 a.m. I've finished switching over the spreadsheet information and I've moved all eight of the books in The Wes Crowley Saga over to D2D. Gonna take a break, then come back to write a little bit.

Wrote a little, but a necessary trip to the store popped up.

Hoping to get a walk in the morning. Try to twist myself back into a more normal (for me) routine.

Topic of the Night: Keeping Records

My Fiction spreadsheet includes columns for the Title and Author (since I occasionally still write under various personas), which Collection each short story is in, Word count, ebook Price, Ebook ISBN 13, and the Publication Date.

Then I have URL columns for my new distributor, Draft2Digital, and a URL column for each major bookstore. That currently includes Kobo, Inktera, Oyster, Scribd, Tolino, Apple, B&N, Amazon and Smashwords (both distributor and bookstore).

I reach a few other major outlets through Smashwords (Baker & Taylor Blio, txtr, Library Direct, Baker-Taylor Axis360, OverDrive, Flipkart), but I don't have individual URLs for those. As D2D adds each one, I'll add a column.

If you're wondering, I keep the URLs in case a reader emails wanting to know where to find a certain book or story. It's nice to have the information handy. This happens a lot more often than you might think.

On the other side of all those URL/venue columns I added the new information: the print edition ISBN 13 (Yes, you have to have a different ISBN for print and ebook), number of pages, print price, and the URL for the CreateSpace eStore. (You can't buy ebooks there. CreateSpace has its own print book store, but it's not brick and mortar. It's only on line.)

If this seems like a lot of extra work, after the initial setup, it really isn't. I view it as a necessary part of being my own publisher. From the time I publish a book or story, it takes about five minutes (if that) to enter all the information on my spreadsheet.

And just so you know, I don't know a lot about spreadsheets in general or about Microsoft Excel in specific. But I've figured out enough to keep a good record of my publications. The point is, if I can do it, you can too (if you want to).

Today's Writing
Honestly, the way the day started, first with the unusual dance with a scorpion and then all the

admin/publisher stuff I did, I wasn't expecting to get a lot of writing done and I didn't. But I'll take it.

It's great to hit goals, but the main thing is to keep the story moving forward. I've been doing that on this one in fits and starts. Forward a bit, back, forward a bit more, back. Nope, that isn't the opening. That scene comes somewhere AFTER the opening.

Okay, write a new opening. Ah, that's better. I've written three openings for this book in five days. (grin) But I'll get through all the fits and starts soon (I do this on pretty much every novel) and the thing will start flowing. Sure looking forward to that. (grin)

Hang around. It'll happen.

Fiction Words: 1187

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 19558
Total fiction words for the year..... 461958

August 24, 2015

The Day

Got up closer to 3:30 this morning. Still dragging a bit.

Checked email, got my coffee and went to check out Dean's site. I haven't been there for a few days. It's almost better that way because when I go late, I read the comments too. Sometimes there's some good stuff there.

Reading Dean's stuff took an hour, almost exactly. Worthwhile, though. I found out in the comments section that we both use the same word counts to describe certain story types. Sort of vindication for me.

Here they are:

Mine and Dean's: To 10,000 words is a short story, to 25,000 words is a novella, to 40,000 is a short novel, and above that is a novel.

In case you're wondering, I also define fewer than 100 words as flash fiction, fewer than 2,000 words as a short-short story, fewer than 7,000 words as a regular short story, and up to 10,000 words as a long short story (or novellette).

Of course, those are my own definitions for my own use in categorizing and pricing my work.

No matter how you categorize your own work, it's cool that we who are not ignorant of this wonderful new world of publishing no longer have to bow before traditional publishing and their mandatory word/page counts and price points. (grin)

I added my novella, A Little Time, to my new distributor over at Draft2Digital.

Ate lunch, and back to writing for a bit. Sort of.

Oh, by the way, I'm doing a new promo thing. I've set the price of Book 1 of the Wes Crowley saga at FREE on Smashwords. You can download ANY electronic format there and it costs you nothing. If you've been wondering about this story that's pushed me through eight books and into the ninth, I urge you to go check it out. You can get it here.

(For Kindle, download .mobi. For other e-readers, download .epub. You can also download PDF. If you read it and like it, consider leaving a review.)

Topic of the Night: The Conscious Mind and the Fear of Rejection
I said awhile back I'd make this a topic of the night. It's probably overdue for many of you. If so, don't feel bad. A year ago it was overdue for me. And the thing is, even after you beat the fear back, it can show up again and again. It's an ongoing battle.

First, the role of your conscious mind—

Your conscious mind exists to gather information and to protect you. That's it. Nothing else.

In its role as a gatherer of information, it's excellent. Then the information that makes sense to you and is useful to you is absorbed by your subconscious mind. After that happens, it's yours, permanently. (This is why you don't have to "remember" how to form a capital letter A every time you sit down to write, or to put a period at the end of a declarative sentence.)

In its role to protect you, though, your conscious mind is a pain in whatever part of the anatomy you'd care to denigrate.

Your conscious mind is what keeps you, a writer, from actually putting words on the page. It's protecting you. If you only talk about writing but never actually put words on a page, you never have to worry about anyone rejecting your work.

I deal with this problem pretty much every day to one degree or another. Even after all the stuff I've written.

Many would-be writers say they'd really like to write but they can't because

- they don't have time
- they don't have a quiet place
- they don't have the right equipment
- they have to do something for someone
- and so on.

And many more finally actually sit down to write and then, just as they put their fingers on the keyboard, they

- have to feed the cat (dog)
- have to make coffee
- have to check email (Facebook, other social media)
- have to do the dishes from the night before
- and so on.

The thing is, it's much easier to "intend" to write than it is to write.

It's much easier to do research or look for cover art or take a trip to your favorite writer's haunts to absorb his/her "spirit" than it is to sit down and actually write.

In other words, it's easier to let the fear win.

Not everyone has the problems I listed above. Some would-be writers don't write because they already KNOW

- their writing won't be any good anyway
- they can't possibly write as much as Harvey does (or Dean does or someone else does)
- the story they want to write has already been done (so have ALL of them)
- the sun came up
- the wind's blowing
- and so on.

Yeah, I know those last couple were ludicrous, but so were the rest of them. Really.

Now, the best way I've found to get over the fear comes in two parts:

Part One: Ahere to Heinlein's Rules. Find them here or click the new link on the Free Downloads page. I copied a three-part presentation into one document, so this is Heinlein's Rules, annotated.

Part Two: Set realistic goals.

And that will be the topic of the night for tomorrow. Or maybe the next day.

Today's Writing
No new writing today. The day just got away from me. That's why the daily goal resets. (grin)
Fiction Words: XXXX

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 19558
Total fiction words for the year..... 461958

August 25, 2015

The Day
Thanks to storms disrupting the clock at the head of my bed, I rolled out at 1:30 this morning, but thinking it was 2:45. So much for battery backups in the clock. (I never use an alarm, but have the clock there so I can see what time it is when I get up.)

Despite the alleged battery backup, when it turns off, the clock reverts to midnight and starts keeping time from there. So the best it can do is tell you how long it's been working since the last time the power went off.

Wow. Remember back when stuff actually worked as advertised?

Anyway, it's all good. I have an appointment with the eye doc this morning at 9:20 in Safford, so leaving here about 7:30 to head that way. My eyes will be dilated and all that, so I'm not sure when I'll be able to write again today. So it's good that I'm up a little early.

I've had my coffee, checked email and all that, so now I'm gonna make a run at the novel.

Read back over some of what I'd already written and allowed myself to touch it here and there (in creative mind) and ended a session with a grand total of 943 words. Woohoo. Still, at least the novel's moving forward. Well, inching forward.

I was distracted by a notification regarding an update on one of the websites I manage. That got me started in update mode and I spent the next two hours making sure all the updates were done. Sigh.

Then one more major disruption cropped up, so I'm setting the novel aside at least until after my appointment. I have to get ready to leave soon, so I'm gonna skip down and write the Topic of the Night now.
Then we'll see what happens with writing when I get back and my pupils get back to their normal size.

UPDATE: Okay, all is well with the eyes for the next year when they'll talk with me about Cadillacs or something like that. I'm scheduled for a hearing test too. Anyway, back in Dear Old Saint David and my pupils are still HUGE. Okay, plus I'm basically just feeling lazy.

So I'm gonna call today a day. Hey, life happens. So no more writing for today other than the little I got done and reported earlier. Got a couple great ideas for stories while I was up there this morning though. So all in all, a great day.

Topic of the Night: Setting Realistic Writing Goals
It's important to set goals with your writing. I mean, if you're serious, if you really want to write, nothing else will help quite as much getting you there as setting good, realistic goals.

And by realistic, I mean something you know you can achieve.

Most people who set goals in other activities will tell you that a good goal should make you reach. That isn't necessarily true in setting writing goals.

So what are the hallmarks of a good writing goal?

- It should be reasonable.
- It should automatically reset each day (or each week or each month).

What do I mean by reasonable? If you write 1,000 publishable words of fiction per hour and are able to write two hours per day but only five days per week, a reasonable daily goal would be 2,000 words per day. A reasonable weekly goal should be 10,000 words per week. If you want to fudge a bit, make it 1,500 words per day and 7,500 words per week. (That extra half hour per day makes a huge difference, doesn't it?)

Why should a good writing goal automatically reset at a specific time?

Because "reset" means "goes back to zero." Neither abundance nor lack is carried forward.

If your goal is to write 2,000 words per day and you write 2,438 words today, that's wonderful. But beginning tomorrow morning, you still have to write 2,000 words. (grin)

If your goal is to write 2,000 words per day and you write only 18 words today, that's okay because beginning tomorrow morning you still have to write 2,000 words.

But since writing 2,000 words per day is well within your capability, isn't the goal too easy?

No. Because life happens. People happen. Distractions happen.

There will be days when you won't be able to write for two hours.

There will be days when, even though you have the time set aside, you'll find that your subconscious is on hiatus. On those days, nothing will come.

And there will be days when you are beset by fear and allow your conscious mind to stop you from writing. Because again, if you don't finish, you can't submit or publish your work and risk rejection.

Or your fear will cause you to rewrite "just this once." Because rewriting is better than actually finishing and risking rejection.

What's best of all about good, realistic writing goals is that they're personal to you. Trust me, nobody else cares, except maybe a few people who support you and want to see you succeed.

If you achieve or exceed your goal, Nothing Happens except that your work is that much further along.

But if you fail to achieve your goal, guess what? Nothing Happens then either and the goal resets the next morning or the next week.

But of course, you won't bother setting goals if you don't intend to achieve them.

And there's one other tool that's a great motivator for meeting goals: The Streak.

And that will be the topic of the night for tomorrow.

I'm going to post this now. Then when I get home from my appointment, if I'm able to write anymore, etc. I'll modify it before it actually posts through MailChimp.

So if you're reading it on my site before 5 p.m., you might want to check back in a while.

Today's Writing
Just a little. Less than I wanted, but more than I had when I started the day. That's why the daily goal resets. (grin)
Fiction Words: X943

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 20501
Total fiction words for the year..... 462901

August 26, 2015

The Day
Rolled out a little after 2 this morning. Coffee and emails to wake up, and then a shocker from the Smashwords blog.

Mark Coker has decided to end his association with Flipkart, the small ebook retailer in India. That effectively hands Amazon a monopoly in distributing ebooks on that continent.

Although I understand why he's doing it, I don't like that even in the title of his post he seems to blame Amazon. Regardless of the circumstances, this was still his own decision. He didn't have to completely abandon the continent to Amazon. You can read the blog post here.

This is terrible news for indie authors. Competition is ALWAYS better. Your ebooks are an investment. Make them available in as many markets as you can.

Seriously, DON'T go exclusive with any one retailer. If you do, you're only feeding the beast that will eventually enslave and/or devour you. Amazon has already started paying KDP Select authors less than other retailers pay them. Don't give ANYONE leverage or control over your work.

I was planning to do a little early morning writing and even get in a walk today. Uhh, no. In light of this news I've decided to switch all of my major publication (novels, novella, short story collections) from Smashwords to Draft2Digital for distribution. So I'll be doing that today.

D2D will now handle distribution of my titles to all the major booksellers, including Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple, Inktera, Oyster, Scribd, and Tolino. Smashwords will still distribute those only to library outlets and something called OverDrive. (I've garnered a total of 4 sales through these outlets since September 2011 so I'm not overly worried about it.)

Why do I suspect this will supplant writing new original fiction for the day? Because it entails moving nineteen publications, all but one of which are collections. I've also decided I'm going to rebrand each collection under my own name (except the two magic realism collections).

Rebranding means revising the cover or creating a new one. Either way, the rebranding part will take only about ten minutes per title.

But I also have to create new front and back matter. (This is NOT a requirement of D2D. It's my own requirement of myself because I want my books to look good.) I also have to reformat each book, double check to make sure the new copied/pasted front and backmatter on each one reads right, etc., then upload each title to D2D.

So I'm expecting to be working on this through most or all of today, and probably more on another day. Or two. (grin) That's all right. It's an investment. Once it's done, it's done.

Okay, my novels and novella were already over there. Today I put up nine of my collections. all of the ten-story collections plus a few others. I also rebranded 14 covers. No more Eric or Nick on collections.

Well, with only most of the day over, I thought I might write for awhile. But I went and talked with Wes a bit and even he agreed that my brain's too tired to ride with him today.

I'll do the topic of the night, and then I'm gonna call it an early day.

Topic of the Night: Be Organized

With what I wrote above about switching my books over to Draft2Digital, you can see the importance of being organized.

In the folder for each book, I had the cover (the raw product so it was easy to change for those I rebranded) as well as several sizes of the old finished cover. I kept the old finished covers as well as one size (2000 x 3000 pixels) of the new covers. I'll make a smaller version soon so I can replace some of the ones on my website too.

I also had a Smashwords edition version of each book, plus a "general" version in each folder. Opening the general version and using Save-As made it a relative breeze to format a new verson for D2D with the new front and back matter I came up with for my D2D books.

Now again, THEY DON'T REQUIRE any particular format, but I like my work to look good and I like it all to look similar from one book to another. So I made all of the books I shipped to them look the same.

In the folder for each book I also thought I had a "promo" document. That's just a simple text document that contains the title of the work, the short and long descriptions, and the Internet search terms. Having that little text document made it easy to just copy/paste the information for each book.

Of course, that was missing from a few folders. Huge difference. When I had that little document, it saved about a half-hour over the time I had to spend on one book when I didn't have it.

You get the idea.

Now maybe you think you won't ever need this level of organization.

Back when I started with Smashwords, I thought they were the be-all, end-all of ebook distribution. Now, four years later, I'm switching everything over to a new distributor, and in the future I might have to again.

So I'm just sayin', when time is at a premium, it's better to do the Boy Scout thing and Be Prepared.

If you have any questions about any of this, I'd be happy to answer them for you. Please ask in the comments section so others can see the Q & A.

Today's Writing
No fiction writing today.
Fiction Words: XXXX

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 20501
Total fiction words for the year..... 462901

August 27, 2015

The Day
Rolled out a little after 2 this morning again.

The hits just keep on comin'. First, I don't feel well. Had a short, unsuccessful walk punctuated by the fear that a high-velocity rainstorm was going to notice me and come my way.

Back to the house, and pretty much blah ever since.

Second, what I wrote in your Topic of the Night below.

I won't be doing any writing today, other than this stuff and revisiting a magic realism story I (Gervasio) wrote a long time ago. It's called "Carmen, Whose Face Was Cracked" and it's a beautiful story in the ethereal sense.

I'll post it as the story of the week for this week. So it will be up on Sunday at the site and posted by MailChimp on Monday morning.

Oh, if you're in the mood to listen to advice from me, I recommend you check Dean's blog (DeanWesleySmith.com) over the next several days. He's gearing up to put up, as a series of FREE freakin' blog posts, a nonfiction book he's writing on Heinlein's Rules. I spent $75 on the video lectures, and it was literally the best $75 investment I've ever made. EVER. Go, get it free.

Topic of the Night: DO NOT GO EXCLUSIVE, ESPECIALLY TO AMAZON KDP SELECT OR AMAZON "SCOUT"

Don't do it. Just don't.

Tell you what. If you want to give someone all rights to your books in exchange for half the royalties, give them to me. Sign a contract giving me all electronic rights and I'll be sure you get half the royalties.

Of course, I don't have to do ANYthing except put your books out there on the market and wait for my 50% to roll in. And that's just find and dandy with you, right?

Sounds nuts, doesn't it? And at least you know me.

But that's exactly what Amazon is asking you to do now.

You sign over the rights to your book for FIVE YEARS and they'll give you a pissy, paltry "advance" of $1500 and then FIFTY percent of the royalties.

I'm not kidding.

Don't do that. Don't. It's stupid. And you can't feign ignorance, 'cause I just told you about it.

Okay, here's what happened: A writer friend turned me on to Amazon's new Scout program and asked what I thought.

In this Scout program thing, according to the writer, Amazon requires the author to "turn over all electronic rights for a period of five years. And then -"

What's that? Sorry, I stopped listening.

Listen. To. Me.

Don't. Be. Stupid.

ANY time ANY entity REQUIRES (or even asks or even suggests or even hints that) you, the author, turn over ALL RIGHTS (electronic or otherwise), the only "turn" you should do is turn on your heel and walk away.

Don't even grace them with an answer.

Seriously, such a ludicrous offer doesn't deserve a response.

And if you DO choose to respond, the word you're looking for is NO.

Personally, I would use a two-word phrase. The second half of that phrase would be either a resounding NO or an equally loud "YOU." The first half of it would consist of the acronym for unlawful carnal knowledge, which is what anyone who asks you to turn over all rights to a piece of work is trying to force upon you.

Understand?

Exclusivity is BAD. Exclusivity in which the book store (and that's all Amazon is, a book store) OWNS YOUR RIGHTS is roughly a thousand times worse.

Don't email telling me Amazon is a publisher. They aren't. And they aren't a distributor. They're a book store. Nothing more.

And their stupid Scout program? Listen. If it wasn't good for THEM, they wouldn't be doing it. Duh.

All of my books and short stories are available on Amazon (a book store).

They're also available worldwide through Smashwords, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple, Inktera, Oyster, Scribd, Tolino,Baker & Taylor Blio, txtr, Library Direct, Baker-Taylor Axis360, OverDrive and Flipkart until a couple days ago. And they're also available through subsidiaries of many of those companies. And I'm always looking for new sales venues to add.

DON'T GO EXCLUSIVE.

There. Forewarned is forearmed. Now go do whatever you want. Just PLEASE don't tell me about it.

Today's Writing
No fiction writing today.
Fiction Words: XXXX

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 20501
Total fiction words for the year..... 462901

August 28, 2015

The Day
Rolled out a little early this morning at about 1:30.

After waking up with coffee and email, I thought about yesterday's post. I was a little harsh maybe.

For years I've seen writers, even retired, very successful business people, allow various companies to take advantage of them.

I despise those companies, and I don't mind being vocal about it.

But the thing is, many writers bring these things on themselves. They're intelligent people, by and large. They don't have to be ignorant. And I "get" that it's easier to just trust some faceless corporation to do the right thing than it is to check them out, or even think too hard about what they're offering.

But you really need to do that anyway. Seriously. We are not living in the same world in which many of us grew up. Anyway, these thoughts led me to the Topic of the Night below.

So from about 2 until about 7:30, I formatted and uploaded eight more collections (all 5-story) to D2D, as well as those three large anthologies I published awhile back that were the results of contests, and the short story, "Coralín." So all caught up on what I wanted to move over to D2D.

Now I have to update the print covers for the collections I previously published under Stringer's or Porter's name (personas).

And Smashwords still has the same books for distribution to a few places that D2D doesn't go, so I probably need to update the files for them too. Not in a massive hurry for that though.

Hmmm. In fact, I might just "unpublish" the titles from Smashwords altogether. It's a LOT of work to change the cover and the front and back matter, and the thing is, I've garnered a total of FOUR sales from all the remaining Smashwords venues (Baker & Taylor Blio, txtr, Library Direct, Baker-Taylor Axis360, and OverDrive) over the past four years.

Yeah, think I'll just unpublish them, pull them from Smashwords completely. That's only the collections that were previously attributed to one of my personas other than Gervasio. I'll go do that right now.

All of my new short stories, novels and collections will go to both D2D and Smashwords.

Okay, I got all that done (about an hour) and then went for a walk. Though I'd be smart and go after the sun was well up, but it got hotter quicker than I thought it would. Outsmarted myself. Only turned about three miles. Guess I'll go back to walking earlier for awhile.

I won't be doing any writing today, other than this stuff and revisiting a magic realism story I (Gervasio) wrote a long time ago. It's called "Carmen, Whose Face Was Cracked" and it's a beautiful story in the ethereal sense. I'll post it as the story of the week for this week. So it will be up on Sunday at the site and posted by MailChimp on Monday morning.

Topic of the Night: Amazon KDP Select and "Scout" Redux

You know, all I can do is tell you what I think is right.

If you go with a program like Amazon Scout, you're keeping your work from a lot of readers who don't use Amazon.

You're also locking up your work for at least 5 years. Amazon's guarantee to you is if you don't make at least $25,000 in royalties over that five years, you can pull your book from the program. Now that sounds like a nice, big number, but seriously, can any of you live on $5,000 per year? I can't.

And like I said yesterday, if it wasn't a good deal for Amazon, they wouldn't be doing it. For every person who DOES make $25,000 over five years, Amazon ALSO makes $25,000 over that same five years, multiplied by the number of people who sign up for this program. Shrug.

It just isn't fair. It isn't a good deal for any author.

Look at it like this. Say you own a rental property. Would you sign over the deed to that property to someone else and then pay them 50% of your income from that property to rent it out for you? Yeah, I didn't think so.
This is EXACTLY the same thing. Exactly.

Your writing, every story, every book, is an investment. Your copyright is property.

Don't give your property away and then split your earnings 50/50 with the new owner. That's just insane.

Tell you what. If you're thinking of going with Amazon Scout, you might as well go with a traditional publisher and give the TP both print and ebook rights. At least with the TP you can negotiate a more realistic royalty rate on ebook sales than the paltry 50% Amazon wants to pay, and TP probably would give you a larger advance too. AND they probably would tie up your book for only two or three years (again, it's negotiable). Just sayin'.

And those who know me know that I NEVER recommend going with a traditional publisher. Never. But compared to Amazon Scout, TP is a better alternative.

One final note: If that $1500 advance looks attractive to you, remember that it's only an advance. They don't pay royalties until your book "earns out" the advance. And if it doesn't earn out the advance? They come back to you to recoup that advance. That's right. You could easily end up paying it back.

And now I'll write what I should have written in the first place last night. Then I wouldn't have had to write the rest of this. Here it is. Ready?

If You Choose To Go With Them, Read The Contract. And have a lawyer read it.

Okay, so that's all I'm gonna say on the topic. Please feel free to prove me wrong. But don't expect me to join you.

Today's Writing

I pecked around a little bit, but no fiction writing today.

I think my numbers are so low for August that I subconsciously decided to take care of a lot of admin stuff instead of worrying about writing. So I did the switchover from Smashwords to D2D, I've kept up this blog and my other main blog, and some other non-fiction writing stuff.

Also, although I stand ZERO practical chance of getting anywhere near my 1,000,000 word goal for the year, I'm past 450,000 published words of fiction right now since January 1 of this year, and that ain't bad.

Fiction Words: XXXX

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 20501
Total fiction words for the year..... 462901

August 29, 2015

The Day
Rolled out a little late at quarter to 3.

Wow. I hope all of you who are reading this are having a lot better month with your writing than I am so far. With the month mostly gone, it isn't likely to improve much either.

No walk today. Not a lot else either, except I switched my internet browser from Firefox over to Opera. I'm more than happy with it. For one thing, whenever Adobe Flash would kick in to run any video (weather, etc.) it ate tons of memory. My computer sounded like a military fighter jet warming up to take off, and it slowed to a crawl. It was so bad that sometimes I used the Alt/Ctrl Delete trick to bring up the Task Manager and shut down the Adobe Flash process.

Now it doesn't do that because Flash works differently with Opera. Cool.

I've been slipping badly on meeting my daily goal of 3,000 words per day. Probably I will adjust that one beginning in September.

But I still have a good weekly goal of one new short story per week. This coming Monday, I'm posting a story I reworked, but that doesn't excuse me from the goal of writing a new one this week (before Monday). So probably I'll do that today. Or tomorrow. (grin)

One good thing about writing short stories is that they're usually finished in one day. Another good thing is that they can lead to a novella or novel. They're also great fun because I can give a character a problem and drop him or her into a setting and I'm off and running. Then I just write the opening (300 to 500 words). If the opening works, I keep writing. If it doesn't, I chuck it and start over or start something new.

But it's pure writing into the dark, just like writing a one-off stand-alone novel. I don't have to worry about timelines or about various characters cropping up from the past and so on.

Anyway, I don't want to allow myself to fail on this short story per week challenge. I want to hold out for as long as I can. The last time I did this, I had a streak that ran for 66 straight weeks (I think that's the right number) and included 70 short stories. I want to try to beat that this time.

But the thing about writing goals is this: If you fail to hit a goal, so what. Nobody dies, the electric company doesn't turn off the power, and the goal resets. In other words, you have absolutely nothing to lose and the world to gain.

Topic of the Night: Rehashing Stuff

I was going to write about "The Value of Streaks," but when I was looking back for info, I realize I talked about setting goals just back in July, from around the 6th or 7th up through about the 10th. In fact, I wrote about setting goals, recurring goals, and the power of streaks. If you're interested, click The Journal tab on the website and scroll back.

And my apologies for repeating myself on this stuff so often. I didn't realize. When I don't have something to talk about, I'll avoid doing a Topic.

Okay, so I'm off this now and working on my own stuff the rest of the day.

Well, as it turns out, that was two hours ago. I remembered I needed to at least rinse off my pickup (tossed cold coffee out the window and it streaked the door), and I ended up washing both the car and the pickup.

Everybody needs a hobby. I guess mine is being stupid in the heat when I could be inside, writing in the (relative) cool. (grin)

So after I cool down a bit and get a shower, I'll write for awhile.

Today's Writing

Got a little done on Wes' story. And it was fun because it completely surprised me. And I'm still feeling lazy, so I guess I'll write the short story tomorrow.

Fiction Words: 1084

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... 1084 words. Total words to date..... 10354 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 21585
Total fiction words for the year..... 463985

August 30, 2015

The Day
Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Good to feel back on schedule.

Spent more time this morning on email than usual but for a good reason. I woke to Dr. Mardy Groethe's weekly newsletter in my inbox. Dr. Mardy is a verbivore. He is the author of I Never Metaphor I Didn't Like, Oxymoronica, and several other books in the same general vein.

Each week his newsletter contains an interesting "puzzler" regarding a famous literary figure. Dr. Mardy provides a brief history and several quotes about the person, and at the end of the newsletter he reveals the person's name.

After the puzzler hints and before the revelation, he provides "This Week's Theme." Then he offers up a bit of introductory prose and then a collection (usually a dozen) of his own favorite quotes on the topic.

And that's what I like best about his newsletter. The listing of quotes he provides is a never-ending source of story titles and story ideas. And if you title and/or write a story based on part of a quote, the quote becomes a ready-made epigraph if you want one. (grin)

I will write the story of the week today, and I will write it based on a title derived from a quotation taken from this week's newsletter.

And to slightly adjust my personal challenge, each new short story I write for the foreseeable future will be based on a quote from Dr. Mardy's newsletter. That should be a blast. (grin)

You can find Dr. Mardy's website at http://www.drmardy.com. To sign up for his newsletter, send a blank email to drmardy-on@mail-list.com. Again, I highly recommend it.

No topic tonight other than the above.

Good walk today. Only about 3.5 miles but new ground through a new wash. And not too sandy so no slogging, or not much. Cool.

Started the story of the week. Then my new Internet browser (Opera) crashed on me three times in an hour. So I'm looking again. Spent the last couple hours doing that, so back to writing for a bit now. I want to see how this story ends. (grin)

As it turns out, I'm not gonna find out how it ends today. Like I said the other day, the good thing about a recurring goal is that it resets if you miss it.

Today's Writing

Well, I won't finish the new short story I started today. No biggie. I'll just start my new streak next week, or the next. I'll get back on track.

I DID get a good opening written, and it's a great title that I borrowed from a quote by Herodotus (5th c. B.C.). So I'll run with that later.

But for now I'm not gonna worry about it. Talk with you all tomorrow.

Fiction Words: 1056

Writing of "A Hiding Place for Weary Men" (short story, but not of the week)
Day 1..... 1056 words. Total words to date..... 1056 words

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words

Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... 1084 words. Total words to date..... 10354 words
Day 8..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 22641
Total fiction words for the year..... 465041

21585
Total fiction words for the year..... 463985

August 31, 2015

The end of a month. A horrible month. Whew. Glad to see this one end.

The Day
Rolled out a little before 3. I was up late (for me) last night working with web browsers. I'll tell you the rest in the Topic below.

A personal note — I've received a few emails recently from some of you expressing concern for what's going on. Really, nothing. Just life. (grin) But I'm doing a mostly daily journal here, and I'm trying to be as transparent as I can in revealing my own life as a professional writer. That's mostly to let you see what's possible, but also that normal (or abnormal) everyday life continues to happen.

To that end, I want to let you see the rough days as well as the smooth ones, the days when I struggle to put together a sentence as well as the days when everything's flowing and I hit 1200 words in an hour. So I do appreciate the concern, but really, everything's fine. If you know me, you know I slip into grouch mode pretty easily, and when I'm in grouch mode, my two year old inner child isn't far behind. (grin)

Administrative note — I could have finished the short story I started yesterday in time to start a streak. I could have finished it this morning and created a cover and posted it before 9 a.m. when MailChimp sends out the story of the week to all the subscribers. (I had the story of the week covered with an older one that I reworked a bit but I still set the deadline for my challenge week at 9 a.m. on Monday morning.)

One of the reasons I didn't bother was because I've been sending this daily journal post. It includes my daily numbers and it goes out at 5 p.m. every day. I couldn't finish the story before that deadline.

So I need to work out my deadlines so they coincide. I'll do that before I start my story-a-week challenge again. Since my workday begins at 2 or so in the morning and ends at 5 in the early evening, probably I'll shift the story-a-week deadline to 6 p.m. on Monday instead of 9 a.m. on Monday.

We'll see. Anyway, it's now 6:30 a.m. I have a new browser I'm happy with thus far (see the Topic below) and am ready to start the rest of my day. No fiction writing today. The month is over. Today I'll take care of some more administrative stuff, like adding a couple blog posts over on the other blog to get a little bit ahead.

Now it's almost noon. I've added four articles to the other blog post so I'm caught up through October 1.

Topic of the Morning: Internet Browsers

I've used Firefox for years. The problem is, I'm a complete two year old when it comes to putting up with things that annoy me and that probably have a solution. The keyword here is probably.

I will spend hours, even days, searching for a solution to an annoyance when I know the solution "probably" exists.

The problem with Firefox was this: When I tried to view a video or even open a website that has photos or videos on it (for example, news feeds or weather radar) in Firefox, my computer would slow to a crawl. It also sounded like a fighter jet warming up on the runway.

You know the sound. When the pilot is increasing the engine speed while keeping his foot firmly planted on the brake until the engines are spinning fast enough to punch him into the sky. Well, something like that. You know.

Anyway, Firefox invoked Adobe Flash, which ran as a separate process and ate up tons of memory, thereby taxing the processor and slowing the computer to roughly the speed of an abacus in the hands of an untrained chimp.

As all humans do in all human endeavors in which Conflict is trump, I finally sought change only when the aggravation of putting up with my current browser finally outweighed the inconvenience of finding a new one, moving all my bookmarks, reinserting all my saved passwords, and all that stuff.

And of course, the need to switch browsers brought up another problem. Which browser?

Now fixing this problem should be as easy as looking at browser comparisons or reading reviews. But it isn't. Not unless you look at several comparisons from various sources and look for common notes among them.

Ditto for reviews. You have to compare several reviews and study them to discern the kernels of unbiased truth hidden in the bought-and-paid-for-and-therefore-biased text.

And finally, you have to download the new browser, transfer all your stuff (or at least find out how difficult it is to transfer all your stuff) and then use it and wait to see what happens.

Relatively speaking, I got lucky.

Yesterday (?) or the day before, I compared notes (per my griping above) and settled on Opera. I downloaded it, transferred everything (to Opera's credit, the transfer was easy) and began using it.

I liked the user interface and enjoyed the ease with which I was able to get around in the browser. Everything was fine for a few hours.

Then it crashed.

The browser was still there, and open. My windows (email, harveystanbrough.com and a couple others) were still on the screen. But in each window, the content — ALL of the content — was replaced with black.

I closed Opera and restarted it, and everything was fine. My tabs all came back. No problem. Probably just a glitch, so no worries.

Then it crashed. Same thing, a half-hour later. Okay, so not just a glitch. Sigh. Well minor-league-curseword-that-begins-with-D.

So I started reading again, comparing notes.

Just in case you're doing this search yourself, here are the two best comparison sites I found:

http://www.topattack.com/list/best-internet-browsers-review/4 and

http://internet-browser-review.toptenreviews.com/.

I found a few programs that seemed like good candidates to become my next browser. I downloaded and installed Internet Explorer 11 and was immediately IMMEDIATELY sorry. It's far too bossy for my tastes, and it isn't NEARLY as fast as the two comparison sites above claim it is. Plus it uses a ton of memory, again, as opposed to what a lot of reviews and the two comparison sites above say.

I quickly grew tired of the "big" browsers. I had tried IE twice and hated it both times. Firefox was out, and Google Chrome seemed overly flippant in their lack of desire to allow the end user (me) to set things up for my own convenience. And Opera… well, I liked Opera a lot except that it apparently is a crash machine.

So I read in-depth reviews about three other browsers: Pale Moon (based on the Firefox engine but sleeker and faster), Torch (based on the Chromium engine, like Google Chrome, it allows for a LOT more personalization and is not as high-handed) and Sea Monkey (based on the Firefox engine but just as fast as Firefox while allegedly using a LOT less memory).

I finally installed Pale Moon, but the first time I visited a news site that had a few pictures on it and links to videos (not even videos, just LINKS to videos), it acted like Firefox. Someone turned the ignition key in an F-16 cockpit and the computer slowed to a crawl. Now I have to admit the crawl was considerably faster than the Firefox crawl, but a crawl is a crawl.

Thing is, I can't abide a crawling browser. Let me explain.

In my world, I don't really notice 1/60th of a minute as it ticks past, but I can get a lot done in, say, 15 seconds. So in my world, a minute has four 15-second segments that I'm intuitively aware of. In my world, an hour has 240 of those. It doesn't just have 60 minutes, but 240 quarter-minutes. That's a lot of quarter-minutes. And during that time, I can accomplish a lot IF my browser isn't crawling along, sapping my strength and my patience.

So the search continued.

This morning, fresh out of bed, I grabbed a cuppa coffee, turned on Pale Moon, opened a new tab and began comparing browsers.

I swear, I thought I heard my computer say in a soft, almost menacing voice, "What are you doing, Harvey?" (see 2001: A Space Odyssey)

And yes, I responded. Aloud. I said, "Nothing. Nothing, ProBook 6460b. Everything's fine."

Then I downloaded the installation files for Sea Monkey (http://www.seamonkey-project.org/) and Torch (http://www.torchbrowser.com/).

Torch downloaded first, so I installed it first. TADA! It's working great.

If it continues to work well, that will be the end of my search. If it doesn't, well, I still have the installation files for Sea Monkey set aside, so we'll see.

If you have any questions about any of this, please ask in the comments section below.

Also, be aware I'm also gonna make this one of my upcoming posts over on the bigger blog. So if you're

signed up over there too, you'll see this again before too long. Probably late September.

TOMORROW BEGINS A NEW MONTH! GO FORTH AND WRITE!

Today's Writing

Well, I just don't have any writing in me today. Well, fiction writing anyway. I probably hit around 3,000 words today of nonfiction and silliness. In fact, there are almost 1700 words in this post alone.

Okay, but I just noticed I didn't add my total from yesterday (1056) to the daily total. I added it to the monthly and annual, but not to the daily, so I'm correcting that today.

Fiction Words: XXXX

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... 1084 words. Total words to date..... 10354 words
Day 8..... 1056 words. Total words to date..... 11410 words
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 22641
Total fiction words for the year..... 465041

September 1, 2015

The Day
Rolled out a little after 2. It's September 1, a shiny brand-new month. New possibilities, newly re-set goals.

Thank goodness.

Coffee and email to wake up. No walk today. Had a violent storm come through here yesterday. That and this little bug that's taken hold of me recently will keep me from walking today. I'll walk tomorrow for sure. A good long one.

Well, back to writing today. It is September 1. No real significance there except that this month I will rededicate myself to writing. I will also see my 755th full moon sometime this month, and the first thing has about as much significance to anything important as the second.

As I alluded to in yesterday's post (I think) things move so fast in my life. I mean even second to second. Or maybe it's just that I'm noticing the seconds more. I've been too distracted recently, with the violent weather and whatever it pitches into the air and a minor nagging illness and all that. I can imagine my drill instructor (Sgt. McGrew, my favorite) saying, "Well, get UNdistracted, y'moron." And he's right.

So I'm beginning to focus on writing again because it's important to me

I felt bad for awhile last night as I considered that my monthly total was only 22641 for this month. That's very low for me. I'm usually up in the 60,000 to 80,000 per month range.

Then I got to thinking about it. If I wrote 22641 every month for a year, that would be 271,692 published words of fiction in a year. One of my writing heroes and a very prolific SF writer named Jack Williamson once lamented that try as he might, he never wrote much more than 100,000 words in a year.

So I'll take it.

And as I keep saying, today is September 1.

Topic of the Morning: No topic today. I'm pooped.

Today's Writing
Fiction Words: 1590

Writing of "Paper Hearts" (began as "A Hiding Place for Weary Men" — short story of the week)
Day 1..... 1056 words. Total words to date..... 1056 words
Day 2..... 1590 words. Total words to date..... 2646 words done

Writing of Book 9 of the Wes Crowley saga
Day 1..... 3213 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words
Day 2..... 1046 words. Total words to date..... 4259 words
Day 3..... 1858 words. Total words to date..... 6117 words
Day 4..... 1023 words. Total words to date..... 7140 words
Day 5..... 1587 words. Total words to date..... 8327 words
Day 6..... X943 words. Total words to date..... 9270 words
Day 7..... 1084 words. Total words to date..... 10354 words
Day 8..... 1056 words. Total words to date..... 11410 words
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 1590
Total fiction words for the year..... 466631

September 2, 2015

The Day

Rolled out a little before 3.

Still have a bug but it's not a major deal. Just very slight headaches that come and go accompanied by (also very slight) chills/fever and nausea. Just blah, y'know?

I did get out for a walk. I decided to do hills, into and out of a wash off Sybil Road. I hoped to shove whatever this is on through my system, but that doesn't work like it did when I was thirty. (grin) I went only about 2 miles, and I felt worse after it was over. So I guess I won't be trying that again.

Looked at pics from the walk this morning, posted a few to Facebook. They're not bad if you like that kind of stuff. You can see them here. The first one looks kind'a like Granny's wig.

By the way, I strongly recommend you check out DeanWesleySmith.com today. Great stuff on his challenge for the rest of this year.

Oh, a quick announcement. I probably won't post anything on this for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I hope to be in the Lower Gila Box Wilderness north of Lordsburg seeing some amazing stuff.

Topic of the Morning: Writing and Selling Short Fiction

Could I do a seminar on this? Yes. I could do a daylong seminar on this. It would depend on interest. If you're interested, let me know by email please at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Recently, some folks who are signed up for my free story of the week have asked why I'm not selling my short stories instead of putting them on the website free. A professional writer friend of mine asked the same question in a slightly different context a few weeks ago.

Think about that for a moment. Why in the world would I limit the audience for my short stories to around 70 subscribers? The answer is, I Don't.

Yes, if you subcribe (see the Story of the Week link in the header on the website), you will receive a brand new short story free in your email once a week. It costs you nothing and you can read it as many times as you want for the next week or so.

But I ALSO publish each story, usually the same day I write it. I publish it to Amazon, the Smashwords store, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Inktera, Kobo, Oyster, Scribd and Tolino. Through those markets, my stories, collections and novels are available in over 100 nations worldwide within a few days of publication.

To give you an idea of the process, I wrote the next short story of the week yesterday. It's called "Paper Hearts." As soon as I finished it, I did the format, created a cover, and published it to my Free Short Story of the Week blog. It will go live on my website on the morning of Monday, September 7. It will go out in email to subscribers on the afternoon of the same day.

So I published it to my website yesterday and set a future release date. But I also published it for sale to Draft2Digital, a distributor who sends it to Apple, Barnes & Noble, Inktera, Kobo, Oyster, Scribd and Tolino. Then I published it to Smashwords, but only for sale in their online store. (You can buy titles at Smashwords.com in any ebook format.) Then I published it to Amazon.

If you want to see it, I recommend you subscribe to my Free Short Story of the Week and wait until Monday to read it. Or just come back to my website on Monday and click the Free Short Story of the Week tab.

But if you're really in a rush and you have more money than patience, you're more than welcome to visit your favorite ebook store anytime and buy it. It only costs $2.99. That includes tax, even if you live in Europe and have that horrible VAT thing going on.

Not ony do I sell each individual short story that I write, I also do this:

When I've written five short stories, I combine them in a short collection and sell it for $4.99. So my readers can buy my stories one at a time for $2.99 (five stories would cost just under $15) or they can get five stories in a short collection for $4.99.

So when I've written TEN short stories, guess what? Instead of buying one or both of the 5-story collections for $4.99 each, my readers can opt to buy one 10-story collection for $5.99 to $7.99. Can you say Good Deal?

From a writer and indie publisher standpoint, each story gives me multiple streams of revenue, too. When I've written ten short stories, I get thirteen publications: ten individual stories, two 5-story collections, and one 10-story collection.

That gives me three separate streams of revenue for each short story. Thirty streams of revenue for ten stories. Times the number of venues in which my stories are for sale.

And each of those is for sale at every venue listed above PLUS at those venues' subsidiaries. Most of the "big" vendors have a few to several subsidiaries to whom they further distribute the books. Cool, eh?

Finally, I also publish each 5-story and 10-story collection as a paperback. Do I get a lot of sales in paperback? No.

But when the reader finds my collection or novel online and sees the paperback price (usually around $15.99) right alongside the ebook price (usually around $5.99) it makes the ebook price look really good. See? Which of course it is.

Today's Writing

Yeah right. I messed around a bit but not enough to mention. I'm kind'a taking the day off today. Might be a few days like that until I get over this stuff. Sure will be glad to get back up to speed.

Now, that being said, I'm not overly worried about it. I mean, yes, I would MUCH rather be writing fiction because it's SO much stinkin' fun when it flows like it should. But the words will still be there when I come out of this crap. So there's that.

In the meantime, all of you can write your little fingers to the bone. (grin)

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Total fiction words for the month..... 1590
Total fiction words for the year..... 466631

September 3, 2015

Rolled out a little before 2 this morning.

I've done practically nothing this morning other than tend to the babies (two kits and a chihuahua), visit Facebook etc.

The bug seems to be going away finally. Woohoo! I walked as a kind of test to see what I could do. Made almost 6 miles out a wash and back. Admittedly the sand was moist from all the rain so well-packed and good walking. Only slogged in a few places. Really nice. So I think I'm over whatever creeping crud has

held sway over me for the past several days. I should be able to get back to my fiction writing soon.

The rest of today I'm going to devote to nonfiction. So another planned day of no fiction writing. See today's Topic for more information.

Topic of the Morning: The Unintentional Streak — Possible?

Yep.

I didn't intend to create a streak with this blog, but I think maybe I have.

Yesterday I announced that this blog probably wouldn't be here for the next few days because I'll be out in the boonies with my bud, Michael Badouin. That's pronounced Bad One, I'm sure, especially since it's a pseudonym and we can pronounce our pseudonyms any old way we want.

Although he might say it's pronounced bad - oo - WIN. To which I would say poTAYto poTAHto when what I actually meant was poTAYto APple. Anyway....

I also mentioned before that streaks have power. They have a life of their own. Turns out that's true even for unintentional streaks.

Even though I wasn't trying to create a streak with this blog, It Wants To Continue even while I'm gone. The thought of leaving a few days blank is just annoying.

So I'm going to at least create a topic for Friday, Saturday and Sunday and then pre-post them. That will give you something of interest (maybe) to read and it will keep my unintentional streak going.

I could just post "placeholder" posts with no real significant content, but when I visit Dean's blog and see one of those, I feel kind of cheated.

And I realize these will be sort of placeholder posts, but at least there will be something there for your money, right?

Besides, my friend Tyron Love just subscribed, and I can't let him start off with a few blank days in a row, can I? Can I? Of course not.

So you may expect to see this blog in your mailbox toward the close of each day for the foreseeable future.

Does anyone else out there enjoy the taste of jalapeno slices when they're slurped off a toad's head?

Never mind. I just was overcome with a sudden urge to write a series of words that probably have never been written before.

Michael would understand.

Today’s Writing

No fiction writing today.

I'm devoting Thursday to writing the topics for the next few days for this blog so I can pre-post them. That and putting together more blog posts for the Pro Writers blog.

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September 4, 2015

Playing around in Gila National Wilderness or someplace just as wild. No entry today about the day.

Topic of the Morning: Write What You Know — Seriously?

Uh, no. Bad advice. Maybe the baddest advice ever, and I mean that in the old sense of "baddest," before we started dumbing down the language. I mean "worst."

It's bad advice because the connotation is that you should write ONLY what you know.

So what? You're supposed to write what you DON'T know?

Yes. Of course. You should also write what you know, but not ONLY what you know.

If everyone wrote only what they know, there would be very little science fiction, zero science fantasy (or other fantasy, for that matter), very little mystery, very little suspense, and so on.

Can you write a police procedural if you've never been a cop? Of course.

Can you write a spy/thriller if you've never worked for the CIA? Yep.

Can you write a romance novel if you've never been involved with a "shuddering, heaving breast" or a guy with flowing hair, broad shoulders, a thick chest with just the right amount of hair on it and trim, athletic hips? Yep.

If you couldn't, novels wouldn't exist.

All you need is Interest. If you're Interested in writing Science Fiction, create a character, give him a problem, and drop him into a setting. What happens first? Shrug. I don't know. He's your character. All I know is he has to solve the problem. (This might not be "the" problem of the story. Just a problem to get the character/situation started.)

If you're interested in writing Mystery, create a character, give him a problem, and drop him into a setting. In this case, it's a good idea if the problem is the body the character just found. (grin)

If you're interested in writing Romance, create a character (or two), give him a problem, and drop him into a setting.

Beginning to notice a trend here?

All you need to begin a story (of any length) is a character with a problem in a setting. That's it. By and large, the setting determines the genre. Most characters and most problems can be cherry picked from one setting and dropped into another. And you'll write an entirely different story in an entirely different genre.

If you don't believe me, try it.

And what do I mean by "setting"? For purposes of this Topic, the setting is where the character suddenly realizes he has a problem. The smaller and more focused the setting, the better.

More on setting tomorrow while I'm not here. (grin)

For now, create a character, give him a problem, and drop him into a setting. Then write an opening. The opening will be around 300 to 500 words, probably. Be sure to include the character's sense of the setting (sight, smell, taste, feel, sound) and have him solve the problem or get underway solving it.

If the opening takes off (most of the time it will take off), just write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence until the character leads you to the end of your new short story, novella, or novel.

If the opening sags out and dies, so what? Toss it. Then either write it again from scratch (if you like the idea) or create a character, give him a problem, drop him into a setting and write another opening. (grin)

Okay, tomorrow, a lot more on setting.

Today's Writing

No fiction writing today. If today is Friday, Saturday or Sunday (September 4, 5 or 6) I'm out in the boonies somewhere refilling my well of experience.

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doesn’t perk up and get with it pretty soon though, I’ll send Wes out behind the barn to think about what he’s done while I’m writing some other stuff.

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September 5, 2015

Playing around in Gila National Wilderness or someplace just as wild. No entry today about the day.

Topic: Setting and How to Write It

Okay, to start a story (of any length) you have to begin. You have to write an opening.

In order to write an opening, you have to create a character, give him a problem and drop him into a setting. But what do I mean by "setting"?

First, here I'm talking about the setting of the opening. The character(s) might move through several settings during the course of the story. Those settings will vary depending on what's happening at the moment. And where it's happening. And sometimes why.

But in the opening, you're trying to get and keep the reader's attention, and the setting has everything to do with that.

I mentioned yesterday that you should include the character's sense of the setting in the opening. That means including all five senses if possible. (For example, if the character's blind or in a completely dark room, probably the sense of Sight won't be involved.)

The character's perception and opinion of the setting will not only paint a picture for the reader, but also will tell him a lot about the character. So it's important. Any description of the setting should pass through the perceptions of the character.

But let's get down to the setting itself. First, it should be as focused as possible.

If your character is on Earth or the moon or a strange planet, that's pretty vague. If he's on the the South American continent, that's a little more focused, but still far too general to draw the reader in. If he's in the Amazon rain forest, that's a little better.

But what about this:

> Dr. Steven Zimmer slipped into the brush just in time. He crouched among the broad leaves and sweet, heady scent of a passion flower vine. The Amazon was flowing a few yards behind him. Several yards ahead of him, a few local males were engaged in some sort of ritual.
>
> And his stupid camera was miles away in the stupid base camp. Wherever that was. He frowned.
>
> But lost or not, he was still a scientist. He leaned slightly forward. His brow tightened against the whispering of the Amazon as he strained to listen.
>
> The language was nothing more than a series of clicks and clacks. Even if he could hear it plainly, he wouldn't have a clue what they were saying. The thought brought a grin to his face.
>
> But the grin fled when a hand gripped his shoulder.

Then again, if your character's down at the docks, that's too vague, isn't it? (Yeah, we probably need to know what city/country but not until the story moves away from the docks.) If he's in a warehouse, that's

better. If he's in a particular part of the warehouse, that's a lot better.'

But what about this:

> The night was dark, the air heavy. A foghorn sounded in the bay and was driven flat in the pattering rain. In the distance, somewhere back in the middle of the city, sirens wailed.
>
> Carrying bolt cutters, Detective Steven Zimmer approached the warehouse door. A thin rivulet of rain trickled off the right front brim of his fedora.
>
> He brought up the bolt cutters, but paused. He could barely make out the padlock. It was the same corroded non-color as the corrugated steel walls.
>
> Maybe he could just cut the hasp. He leaned closer. The musty wood frame was so damp he probably could just pry the hasp out of it.
>
> But the hasp had already been cut. He looked at it for a moment, then put one palm against the edge of the door. Carefully, he pushed. It slid a few feet to the right with only the slightest grinding in the runner.
>
> The scent of old grease reached his nose as he crouched, placing the bolt cutters on the tarmac. When he straightened again, his .45 caliber Kimber Tactical II was in his right hand.
>
> He took a deep breath. Backup would be good. But you can't call for backup when you're working a case on the sly.
>
> He gentled his index finger along the cool metal of the trigger well, then slipped in through the door.

Get the point?

Note that the setting in the second example was external to the warehouse. Still, it was focused down. Everything took place within a man-sized area just outside the warehouse door.

In the first example, the setting was actually larger, encompassing a few yards behind the POV character to several yards ahead of him. In it, as in the second example, the focus was created through the character's physical senses.

Today's Writing

No writing today, probably. I'm out in the boonies somewhere refilling my well of experience.

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doesn't perk up and get with it pretty soon though, I'll send Wes out behind the barn to think about what he's done while I'm writing some other stuff.

Total fiction words for the month..... 1590
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September 6, 2015

No doubt on our way back from playing around in Gila National Wilderness or someplace just as wild. No entry today about the day. Just some musing, as you see below.

Few things are more enjoyable than writing a brand new story.

As I've been telling anyone who will listen, just give a character a problem, drop him into a setting, put your fingers on the keyboard and go for it. It's an absolute blast.

I've already pre-posted Thursday, Friday and Saturday's posts. IF I've written anything during the weekend and IF I'm back early enough on Sunday, I'll update this before it goes "live" at about 5 p.m.

Over the next day or two (meaning Monday or Tuesday) or however long it takes, I'll update you on the trip. I like to share things like that, especially as they affect (or might affect) my/your writing. So I hope you'll look forward to that.

For now, though, just in case I'm not back early enough on Sunday, or just in case whatever else keeps me from posting, I'm going to write one more Topic and add it below. 'Cause from what I've heard it's always wise to be prepared.

(Oh goodness. I almost wrote

"or just in case I come over a ridge while wearing my Infidel ball cap and run headlong into 13 members of a radical terrorist group that shall remain nameless because, after all, it's just their culture, who are forcing unnatural perversions on a pitiful little creature who also shall remain unidentified but who bears a remarkable resemblance to [ahem] a goat, and in that eventuality, even though I take out the first dozen because I'm just an untenably violent person, somehow or other I don't see that one silly little sword-wielding scamp sneaking up behind me with beheading on his mind and, well, just in case of something like that I'm gonna write one more Topic and add it below. 'Cause it's always wise to be prepared."

But I didn't. Whew. As the little guy in MIB III says, That was a close one.)

Topic of the Day: Using the Persona

Everyone who's familiar with my work already knows I have used personas to great advantage as alter-egos. They were/are writer friends of mine who write things I am/was unable to write.

I stopped using two of them when Eric Stringer (it is strongly suspected) killed Nick Porter. Nick wrote mostly mainstream, serious stuff. It was relatively easy for me to take over that writing myself.

Some time after Nick was killed, Eric simply didn't show up for work one day. It is rumored that he moved to a far-far-faraway land where he occasionally writes short stories under the pen name Harvey Stanbrough. Quite the jokester, our Eric. Anyway, Eric, at one time, was my borderline psychotic persona. Since he left, I have decided to "let my little light shine" in that regard. Stay tuned.

Okay, but here I'm going to talk about using the persona as a recurring character. I think that that would be valuable.

For one thing, writing your passion (note, I didn't say writing ABOUT your passion) would be a lot easier if you did so through a persona.

The best known example of a writer using a persona to (ahem) distance himself from responsibility for his writing was Samuel Clemens. In his books, Clemens made social commentary that would rankle politicians and pundits alike. To distance himself somewhat, he allowed Mark Twain to write those books.

And in one case, in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, arguably his strongest advocacy for social reform, he handed off the job to Mr. Twain, who in turn handed off the task to an innocent named Huckleberry Finn.

Now say I get a strong sentiment in my head. Just as an example, let's use the (very) thinly veiled rhetoric in the paragraph I almost wrote (but didn't) just before I started this Topic of the Day.

I can't write stuff like that. Seriously. I might offend someone. Whatever.

But my characters can do or say anything they like. After all, they're doing the talking. I'm just writing it all down. It's like Don't kill the messenger, right?

Wow, and I could have characters for all kinds of different genres.

I could have a hard-nosed detective, say somebody like Steven Zimmer, who goes around solving crimes. Plus he obviously is All Man enough to even take on cases that are not sanctioned by the local police department so you just KNOW he's gonna break a few rules. And that's always fun, right?

I could let Cranston Longdink III sink his family's "old wealth" into a porn empire specifically for an untapped market roughly halfway around the world. The ensuing stories would be about the procurement of goats and what happens to the goats after they're procured. (Of course, no underage goats would be used in the stories.) This might well spin off into documentaries concerning goat trafficking, national and international treaties on goat trafficking, and the link between goat trafficking and "medicinal" poppy production in certain parts of the world. Coincidence? I don't think so. Film at 11.

I could have Rip Sternaman barge into hostage situations all over the world, muscles bulging, and call the bad guys names that are SO fitting for bad guys before he breaks every bone in their arms and then ties them together (by the arms) for transport to wherever he's gonna take them.

I could have Dexter Murfee Nettleson, he with the radiant smile, walk happily into The Morning Store each morning to begin the day with a cup of sunshine sweetened with butterfly spit and stirred with the pinky finger of an eighty-three year old virgin.

You get the idea.

Of course, these are books that EVERYBODY would buy but that nobody would talk about or admit to buying, except possibly the ones starring ol' Dexter.

Anyway, regardless of what you think personally about these particular examples, you're writers, so give the topic some thought. Value? No value? Seriously, I think if you write your passion through your characters, you can let 'er rip.

And if we're all very lucky, maybe I'll get back on Sunday early enough to replace this with something else. (grin) But if not, just look at all the trash you will never have to write because I just wrote it.

Today's Writing

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The Journal, Monday, 9/7: Reading

As you can see from the title of this post, beginning today I'm offering a slightly different format. I'm including at least a hint at the Topic of the Post in the title. When I don't include a topic for that day, I'll try to slip something in there to give you an idea of what the post is about.

I'm also going to be removing older posts from the website. They take up unnecessary space, and there's no need for that. I'll leave some of them up in case anyone wants to scroll back. Maybe a week's worth or something. But if you enjoy a particular topic or something like that, be sure to save it for yourself.

Rolled out around 3:30 this morning. The trip to the Lower Gila Box was very good, but more exhausting than I realized. We both (Michael = Dan, and I) got a lot of good pics. I thought a few of mine would slide up into the excellent category, but when I opened them on my computer last night, they just weren't all that. I'll post a few of them on Facebook later. Probably. Maybe.

Haven't done much this morning but catch up on reading online news and newsletters, emails, etc. Later today I hope to read more in a book of Bradbury interviews. More about that in the topic below. I'm also going to mow the yard in a while, and I plan to put together a few daylong seminars. So no fiction writing today.

No walk today either. Maybe even for the next couple of days. My buddy and I walked only perhaps 3 miles per day on Friday and Saturday, and another mile or so on Sunday before we left to come home. But a great deal of that walking was on some pretty steep slopes. And it seemed we were always climbing, never descending. Weird how that works. (grin)

Okay, so rather than boring you with minute by minute details, I'll just say generally today will be some nonfiction writing, some reading, some exploring a new sales venue I found (I'll report on it later if it works out), some work out in the yard, and a lot of sitting under a fan trying not to move so I won't burst into flames.

Talk with you again mañana.

Topic of the Post: Reading

Of some significance, while we were camping in New Mexico, I caught up on a bit of reading. Specifically I read parts of a book called Conversations with Ray Bradbury. Edited by Steven L. Aggelis, this is a compilation of Interviews with Bradbury, whom I consider to be the best short story writer—and maybe the best storyteller—of all time.

I strongly recommend this book.

The title is not yet available as an ebook (darn it), but I got a mint-condition paperback copy for 99 cents plus $3.99 (or thereabouts) shipping. If you're interested, just look for the title at Amazon or Barnes & Noble, then pick which copy you want. I think you won't be disappointed.

In many ways, the writing advice imbedded in Bradbury's responses validates my own beliefs about good writing practices, including writing into the dark, reading your work aloud and many others.

But I have also learned a few things (in less than a few hours' reading time) that might have taken me years to learn if I hadn't picked up this book.

Bradbury's process is slightly expanded over my own and over what I teach. He does write strictly from his subconscious (writing into the dark). But instead of sending his work off to a first reader, he then reads over his own work, reading aloud, looking carefully to trim anything that is unnecessary to the work.

He isn't looking to rewrite anything. He isn't looking at sentence structures. He's looking only to trim the fat.
The, I believe, he submits the work or publishes it. (I say "I believe" because in one interview, when pressed, he told the interviewer he makes at least seven passes at his work, cutting more each time. I seriously doubt that is true. I suspect it's something he feeds writers who need to feel that their own "rewriting" process is valid.)

The point is, remain open to learning. The more open-minded you remain, the more information you can take in, assess, and choose to retain or discard. And the more your skills as a storyteller and writer will improve.

Today's Writing

As I mentioned above, no fiction writing again today. Just kind'a getting used to being back. Also I put together three daylong seminars I'm planning to offer to the good folks in the greater Phoenix area and also over in Tucson. We'll see whether anyone's interested.
Here they are just in case you're interested:

Writing Off Into the Dark (daylong writing intensive) — Major subtopics include Heinlein's Rules, Productivity, Writing Myths, The Difference Between Short and Long Fiction, How to Practice Writing, The Difference Between Rewriting and Revising (Cycling Back), and a lot more.

Writing the Character Driven Story (good for any length story, daylong writing intensive) — Major subtopics include Where to Get Story Ideas, How to Write from Inspiration, The Importance of Setting and How to Write It, How to Write an Opening, How to Select a Genre, The Five Senses Exercise, and two more in-class and take-home exercises.

Smart Self-Publishing (daylong seminar on the publishing side of writing) — Major subtopics include Why Self-Publishing Instead of "Traditional" Publishing, The Difference Between Self-Publishing and Subsidy Publishing, Copyright Explained (It Costs Nothing), ISBN and LCCN Explained (Don't Buy Your Own), Set Yourself Up as an Indie Publisher, Epublishing and Print Publishing, Getting Paid as a Self-Publisher, Your Book Available Worldwide in a Matter of Days, Price Your Ebooks and Print Books Competitively, The Importance of the Book Cover, Where to Find Cover Art, and a handout listing specific URLs and recommendations for formatting, print layout and cover design.

So there y'go. If you'd like to have any of these seminars in your area, email me at HarveyStanbrough@gmail.com or leave a comment below.

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The Journal, Tuesday, 9/8: Challenges

Rolled out a little before 2 this morning. I think I'm almost caught up on my rest. Still, not much in the mood to write, although I'd better GET in the mood as the clock is ticking for the next short story. (grin)

Again I didn't do much this morning but catch up on more of my preferred reading. Later I also opened all the pics (over 400) from the Gila trip. I separated out the ones my partner wanted to see and put them in a special folder to share. (As soon as they're synced in my Dropbox, Dan, I'll send you a link.)

Went for a walk, though it was more to take more pics than anything else. Still, turned over just less than four miles. Also managed to take 168 pics. All that in about 2 hours.

Did a little more yard work after I got back from the walk.

Topic of the Post: Challenges

I was reading Dean's blog post a little while ago. He set a mega-challenge for himself. To meet the challenge, he has to write three novels in September, two in October, three in November and two in December. That's ten novels in four months. He's thinking around 40,000 to 60,000 words each.

He's getting a slow start on the first month. He needed to write a novel every 10 days during September, and today, on the 8th, he's written only about 15,000 words. But he isn't worried.

For one thing, writing "only" two novels during October and December gives him a little catch-up room if he needs it. For another — and this is the biggie — if he "fails" in his challenge and writes "only" 7 novels or 8 or 9 instead of the 10 novels he plans to write, won't that just be terrible? (grin)

The real value in a challenge is teaching the writer that Failing To Success is a good thing.

I said something similar a few posts back. Even if I stopped writing right now and didn't write anymore fiction for the rest of the year, I would still end the year with over 466,000 words of publishable fiction. And all but 11,410 words of that is actual PUBLISHED fiction. This year.

So even if I just stopped right now, I would have "failed" to success.

But that wouldn't be any fun, now would it? (grin)

A New Challenge

Back in July, Dean set himself another challenge. He challenged himself to write 31 short stories in 31 days. He then published them individually as short stories, but he also will publish them in a collection titled *The Stories of July* (or something like that).

Now seven days of September are already history, but I really need to jumpstart my writing. I need to get my writing blood pumping again. So I'm setting a new goal, publicly. As Andy Griffith would say, “Right chere, right now.” (grin)

Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. Not really that big a deal. It just means that I'll have to write two stories on seven of the remaining twenty-three days. (grin)

Now, just so everything's above board, to satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, not flash fiction (6 to 99 words) or short-shorts (100 to 2,000 words). So they all have to run over 2,000 words. I don't dictate to my characters how long stories have to be, so I might write some of those shorter ones too, but if I do they don't count toward the challenge.

Stay tuned. This should be a blast.

Today’s Writing

Okay, first a note about the Wes Crowley saga. I've set the most recent novel aside for the time being. From what I can tell, it doesn't feel like being written right now, so that's that. I still feel as if there are at least two more novels in the story, but we'll just have to wait and see.

I think this is the right thing to do. Book 9 was rough from the beginning, and it isn't supposed to be like that. On that one thus far, I wrote only 11410 words in 8 days. That's an average (aritmetic mean) of only 1426 words per day. On a novel full of characters that I love. That isn't me.

So it's off to the races on the challenge. I hope maybe some of you will join me.

Well, a slow start on the "race." (grin) Only 721 words on a brand new story. Absolutely no worries. I expect to finish this one in an hour or two in the morning, then write a second one. Who knows? Maybe I'll even knock out a third one tomorrow.

Fiction Words: 0721

Writing of "Untitled about Mavis Harshbarger" (short story)

Day 1..... 0721 words. Total words to date..... 0721 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Total challenge stories for the month..... 0 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 0721
Total fiction words for the month..... 2311 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 467352

The Journal, Wednesday, 9/9: Retraining

One more fairly major change to this blog. I've changed it so the full post appears in your email. You'll still have the option of reading the whole thing in your browser where it looks a lot better. And of course I'll continue to hope you will refer this to others, but you can also just read the whole thing in your email now.

This won't help those who don't bother to even open the email, but for those of you who do, maybe this will make things a little easier.

Rolled out a little before 2 again this morning. Checked email and other stuff while waking up. Unfortunately, I was distracted so failed to write during the first two hours of the day.

Sometimes email or Facebook or an article in one of the newsletters I get distracts me too much. I might need to go straight to writing, then go to emails and all of that after two or three writing sessions (so around 5 or 6 a.m.) Maybe I'll try that for a day or two. I mention this only in case you might also have this problem occasionally.

So today I allowed myself to be distracted, then wrote this blog post and now it's almost time for my walk.

Becoming a professional writer takes some retraining, and some of it is ongoing. Like you, I'm learning as I go. Much more on all this in the Topic below.

I'll go out to walk about 6. Then back here to write.

Good walk. Left my camera in the pickup and just walked. Planned on 6 miles, but at mile 3 I decided to go for 8. Then about halfway to that I realized I was being stupid and cut it off. Ended up with 7.4 miles at just over 18 minutes per mile. Not bad for an old guy. Turns out I could have made 8. I'll put that in the bank for another time.

Topic of the Post: Retraining

Well, all of that was a good lead-in to the topic of retraining.

If you want to become a professional writer, or if you want to become a more prolific professional writer, chances are you need to change a few habits. That's the retraining I'm talking about.

This is something nobody else can do for you. It's a lonely, internal endeavor.

Others can give you motivation, tools and suggestions that you can use in your retraining, but that's as far as they can walk with you along this very private path.

What keyed my own retraining way back in early 2014 was reading Dean Wesley Smith's very short book, How to Write a Novel in Ten Days. He ghosted a complete 70,000 word novel, under contract, in ten days. He blogged about the experience as he did it, then published those blog posts as a book.

When I first started retraining myself to be a writer, I adjusted my personal day to replace a few hours that to me were wasted. I replace those with hours during which I could work. That's why I go to bed at 7 or so.
The time from 7 to 11 p.m. holds little value to me. I would do nothing but sit on the couch and stare at the TV, slowly numbing my mind. So I sleep during those hours.

From 2 to 6 a.m., it's quiet and I can work, so I substitute those hours for the ones I cut.

Those hours, that schedule, is pretty much all I have left of my original retraining. But what I do during that time has slipped severely. So here I am, having to retrain myself again. In case they'll help you in your own endeavors, here are the main points of my own retraining:

- I'll keep the hours I have now, but I'll use the early hours (2 to 6 a.m.) for writing.
- In all writings, I will strive to give my subconscious free reign and Write Off Into the Dark.
- I will adhere to Heinlein's Rules.
- I'll get off the break-every-hour schedule. Dean does this so I thought I'd try it. It doesn't work for me. As often as not, forcing myself to take a break after an hour or so kills the story I'm working on. I'll continue to take breaks when I'm tired, even if only to get up and move around a bit, but I won't limit those to a particular time frame or word count.
- I'll spend no more than a half-hour on wake-up time. During that time I'll consider my progress and make necessary adjustments in my current challenge. Might also use the time to revisit goals, etc.
- As part of my retraining, tomorrow morning (and on the mornings that follow) I will write for at least two hours before my walk (fiction only).
- I'll continue to walk on most days. Gotta do it, and I like it anyway.

And I'll continue to post this blog as a journal for myself and in the hopes my mistakes will help someone else.

My Current Challenge and Goal

Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September.
To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge.
Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
Still stuck in a slow start on the challenge. Every story is different. In this one, I'm working to add a lot of depth through the characters' physical senses, so I'm doing a lot of cycling back. It's similar in a way to rewriting, except you do it as you go and it's all done in creative voice (from the subconscious). In other words I'm not making any conscious decisions regarding word choice or sentence structure or anything like that.

I finished this one, but at times it was rough going. Not smooth and not as much fun as it should have been. The fun was more in the dialogue exchange among the characters and in weaving the setting into that through the senses of the characters.

I won't do a second one today, that's for sure. As I said, I allowed myself to be distracted, and that slowed me down a lot.

Tomorrow morning I'll get up with a new story idea and go for it.

Fiction Words: 1762

Writing of "Finding Harold Harshbarger" (short story)
Day 1..... 0721 words. Total words to date..... 0721 words
Day 2..... 1762 words. Total words to date..... 2483 words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for

that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 1 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 2483
Total fiction words for the month..... 4073 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 469114

The Journal, Thursday, 9/10: Life Happens

Checked email first thing this morning per usual. I received a request to write a foreword for an anthology being published by Creative Writing Institute. I've told them I'll do it.

Rolled out a little after 2 this morning. By 3 a.m. I was writing. Yay! The retraining is in progress.

I wrote awhile with a couple breaks, then went to walk a local arroyo about 6. Again left my camera in the pickup and just walked. Finished with 5.8 miles and got back here around 9.

Then I remembered a drab but beautiful little flower that appeared in the background of a pic I took a few days ago. So on the spur of the moment, I decided to drive out that road, find the flowering plant, find that flower and capture it. Got it and was back within another hour. It's a road I walk on a lot out here so I know it pretty well. I pinpointed the flowering plant I wanted by looking at the pic I took before that one and the pic I took after it. (grin)

When I got back I had a stack of emails waiting, many from the folks for whom I will write the foreword, so I responded to those, spent a little time on Facebook posting pics, then got a shower. Now it's noon (where does the time go?) and I'm turning to my writing 'puter.

Hey, life happens. When it does, you roll with it, then start writing. No matter what happens, if you're a writer, you write.

Right now in my retraining, I'm focusing on writing first thing in the morning. Got that done this morning, so success there. Tomorrow I'll do the same thing. When that becomes habit, I'll begin expanding the hours and calming down the rest of the day.

But for today, good enough.

Topic of the Post: No topic tonight beyond the above

My Current Challenge and Goal

Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing

Usually, when I write a short story it all comes flooding out in a few to several hours in one day. Maybe two or three times in my life have I taken longer than one day to write a short story. And then I took two days to write "Finding Harold Harshbarger." And now, apparently, I'm going to take two days to write my current WIP, a short story about a mob accountant who turned state's witness and is in witness protection.

That's okay. Even though I'm not officially throwing in the towel on the challenge for this month, I'm not suffering under any illusions that I'll actually pull it off at this point. I'll leave it in place as a personal incentive, but probably I'll use the rest of this month to retrain myself and get my writing pump going again.

As I wrote above, for today, good enough. At least my daily word count is climbing back up to respectable levels.

Fiction Words: 2327

Writing of "Untitled about mob accountant" (short story)
Day 1..... 2327 words. Total words to date..... 2327 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 1 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 4810
Total fiction words for the month..... 6400 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 471441

The Journal, Friday, 9/11: Going On the Cheap

Up right at 2 this morning. Again, by 3 a.m. I was writing. That'll work. The retraining continues. I'm noticing I seem to have less self-discipline the older I get. Is that how it's supposed to work?

No walking today. With over 7 miles two days ago and almost 6 miles yesterday, I'm taking a day off from walking.

Okay, got a lot of writing done today as well as a cover for "Finding Harold." It will be the story of the week for next Monday.

That's really about all that happened today. Since the topic is so long, I'll curtail the rest of this.

Topic of the Post: Going on the Cheap

Don't do it. There. End of lecture.

If you're a writer and if you're serious about your work and if you want others to take you seriously, invest in your product (your writing, your cover, your book).

You can invest the time to educate yourself and the money in professional programs so you can create your own eformatting and print layout and ebook and print covers OR you can invest money in paying professionals to do those things for you.

What brought this up?

I recently was privy to see a complete and utter piece of literary garbage that was (from the front matter of the book) "printed with the Espresso Book Machine at The University of Arizona Main Library." I kid you

not.

I can't say whether the author believes his book has now been published by the U of A (it hasn't) or what. Maybe he uses the service because it's free. I don't know. What the "Espresso Book Machine" turned out was so terrible, I won't even do the few minutes' research to find out what it costs, whether it's free, or anything else about it.

What I will tell you is this: Garbage in, garbage out. Even if your writing is excellent, if the formatting of the document you feed into the maching looks like garbage, what you get back will look like garbage.

Here's my brief review. Remember, this is all formatting stuff, stuff that could EASILY be fixed if the person who formatted it had only cared enough about his final product to take his time.

The Table of Contents - The title of this page (Table of Contents) was in the same font, same size, and same attribute (normal, not bold, etc.) as the listing below it. Capitalization of titles varied within the TOC and from TOC to actual story. The TOC itself was hokey. First was the title of the story, then a space, then the word page (yes, lowercase) and then a span of pages, for example 3-16.

Overall Layout of the Book - The inside front cover (apparently) was the only title page. The title was at the top, the author's name was near the bottom, and a page number was at the center bottom. (The title page should not be numbered.) There was no publishing information on the title page. (Usually the publishing company name is displayed there.)

The next page is the copyright page. It stated the year of copyright, but failed to mention in whose name the book is copyrighted. Skip a line and insert a dedication. Skip another line and insert permission for teachers to reprint parts for classroom use. Skip one more line and add a simple disclaimer. Then skip a few lines and insert a brief paragraph blaming the Espresso Book Machine for this travesty, although that isn't how they put it. Oh, and lest we forget, the copyright page is numbered page 2.

Page 3 is the previously discussed TOC, and the first story begins on page 4, a recto. Later in the book, some stories began on the verso (left page of an open book, as they should) and some on the recto (right page of an open book).

Finally, on most pages the text begins at the top of the page, but on some it begins one or two lines down.

Title of the Stories - The titles of the stories were the same font, font size and font attribute as the body of the stories. (Usually the title is at least bold attribute and/or a larger font size.)

As I mentioned in the section on the TOC above, the titles of the stories varied with regards to capitalization. The position of the titles at the top of the page also varied. Some were left justified and some were centered. Apparently no standard was applied.

The Body of the Stories - The body of the first story was double-spaced with no extra spacing between paragraphs and with the first line of paragraphs indented. It would have been perfect if it were single-spaced. (Remember, this is for a print book.) Hyphenation obviously was not turned on. As a result the text is broken with rivers of wide white space running diagonally through the text. All of that is from page 4 (beginning of the story) through the first full paragraph on page 8. After that there was an extra space between that paragraph and the next. Then it returned to no spacing after paragraphs until page 13, where the anomaly happened again. Then it continued normally again until page 17 where the anomaly occurred twice in a row. The story ended suddenly without any sort of signifier such as "The End" or a series of asterisks or "Go Away."

The second story was formatted differently. This one was left justified, single spaced, with a space after each paragraph, and without first-line indents. Great for a blog post. Not so much for a story in a

collection.

The third story was formatted the same as the second, except in some places it looked as if there was no space between two paragraphs.

The next several stories were formatted the same as the second and third, with no first-line indent, block paragraphs, left justified, and a space between paragraphs. Except sometimes there were two spaces between paragraphs.

This truly was an ugly, ugly book.

Now, to be fair, the Expresso Book Machine is ONLY a machine. It was not at fault for this piece of garbage. Whoever formatted the Word file for the author was at fault. The author should fire whoever laid out this travesty, immediately and with prejudice.

Do you understand? If you put out a piece of garbage like this, it won't matter how good the writing is because the reader won't get that far.

My Current Challenge and Goal

Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge.

Stay tuned.

Today's Writing

Finished the Harold Nickel story, then got a good start on another one, so I'm happy.

Fiction Words: 3858

Writing of "Harold Nickel's Last Dime" (short story)

Day 1..... 2327 words. Total words to date..... 2327 words
Day 2..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 4329 words (done)

Writing of "The Old Jenkins Place" (short story)

Day 1..... 1856 words. Total words to date..... 1856 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 2 (Goal is 30)

Total challenge words for the month..... 8668

Total fiction words for the month..... 10258 (1590 on Wes)

Total fiction words for the year..... 475299

September 12, 2015

Up a little before 2 this morning. Writing before 3:30. A little delay this morning because I was (and am) tending to my kitten.

Yesterday, something outside scared her badly. She raced in, then through the house looking for a place to hide. For some reason she didn't hide in her safe place under the bed. Instead she ran back into the kitchen, up on the counter, then up on the cabinets. The tops of those are nearly eight feet off the floor.

She was stuck there because there was no room to turn around. I ran back into my office to get a small chair so I could get her down, but by the time I got back she had already jumped to the tile floor. In the process she hurt her left hip. Now she's having trouble even jumping from the floor up to my desk.

So I'm kind of watching over her this morning, babying her and so on.

I don't think she broke anything, but either way she has to take some time to heal. But she's very much a free spirit so I have to watch to make sure she doesn't jump from too high up and keep irritating the injury.

For example, her food bowl is in a broad window alcove next to my desk, so it's about 30″ off the floor. After she eats, she wants to jump straight to the hard floor, so I watch and redirect her to go off the front of my desk onto a chair, and then from there to the floor.

So I guess that'll be the next few days.

This falls into the Life Happens category, and in this case, it takes precedence over everything else.

No walking again today. I don't want to be out playing in the desert when my little girl decides to do something she isn't up to right now.

After I filed this post yesterday I put together a cover for "Harold Nickel's Last Dime." In addition to writing today, I hope to get the formatting done on the two stories I've finished and on the one I will finish today.

Oh, just in case you're wondering, I'm sticking to my one story a week goal too. Each story I post as the free story of the week was written during that week.

Update: Finished the last story, "Exotic," at about 4:30. The cover fell into place and I published it to D2D. The numbers are below. Makes me feel like a real writer again.

Topic of the Post: Writing When You Can
Sometimes, like today, life intervenes in your writing time. In most cases, though, it doesn't keep you from writing. Most of the time it merely adjusts the times that you write and the length of time during which you are able to write.

Some people (I am one of them) are fortunate in that they can slip into and out of the Alpha state of consciousness at will. Most people can, actually, though most people aren't aware they have this ability.

But they do. Let me prove it. When you were in school taking a test, were you ever stuck for an answer even though it was right on the tip of your mind? Did you put your pencil to your lips and roll your eyes upward, as if the answers were written on the ceiling?

Yep, most of us did that. And most of the time, the answer "came to us," just as we knew it would. I'll bet you do the same thing when you're writing and you suddenly find yourself stuck for a particular word. You roll your eyes up or you stare off into space for a moment. And often as not, the word comes to you.

The physical act of rolling your eyes up triggers Alpha and accesses the subconscious. The physical act of staring off into space slows the electrical activity in the mind to Alpha rates as well.

And that's why this technique works. Because we are accessing our subconscious mind by dropping into Alpha for a moment.

Okay, so why is the ability to slip into Alpha at will important? Because Alpha is the beginning stage of what we call the subconsicous. And the subconscious is MUCH better at telling stories than the conscious, critical mind.

So writing when you can — Most people, writers included, have more time available to them than they know. Most of the writing I get done today will be in ten minute to half-hour increments. If you write about a thousand words per hour (that's only 17 words per minute), you can write about 170 words in ten minutes or 250 in a quarter-hour. Do that several times during the day (when you can) and the words will build up into the thousands. And the story will get finished.

So don't worry about it. When you have a few minutes, sit down at the computer (where your story is already up on the screen) and just have fun. Immerse yourself for a few minutes or a half-hour or an hour in the sheer joy of running through the scene with your characters, writing down what they say and do.

Which is where I'm going right now.

My Current Challenge and Goal
Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
Writing around the kitten was a challenge in itself, but one I gladly performed. I'd have been pleased with any amount of writing today, so it all turned out really well. Super well. And all of it was writing in small increments. I hope in another day or two she'll be back to her version of normal and we can both get back to our usual roles.

Fiction Words: 4531

Writing of "The Old Jenkins Place" (short story)
Day 1..... 1856 words. Total words to date..... 1856 words
Day 2..... 1357 words. Total words to date..... 3213 words (done)

Writing of "Exotic" (short story)
Day 1..... 3174 words. Total words to date..... 3174 words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30

individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 4 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 13199
Total fiction words for the month..... 14789 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 479830

The Journal, Sunday, 9/13: Writing When You Can

Up right at 3 this morning. The writing and tending to the kitten took their toll so I slept longer than usual, but she seems to be doing much better this morning. She spent a lot of time yesterday and last night resting and healing.

It's odd how much she can put up with and how stoic she is about it. Humans could learn a great deal from little wonders like my girl. I've learned tons from her, not that all of it stuck.

I'll get a little slower start to writing this morning, but I'm probably not gonna walk today so that adds a couple hours back in.

Stinkin' coyotes are screaming this morning. Whoever first named those things "song dogs" must have been tone deaf. Or drunk. Or just a moron. Or maybe he was one of those guys who rubbed his palms together a lot while drooling through a smile and watching children being ripped apart by wild dogs. Ugh.

I did get to watch a little of the LSU @ Mississippi State game before I sacked out. Man, it's like those LSU guys are from another planet. Geaux Tigers! I was also pleased to see this morning that Arizona and Oklahoma both won their games. And I guess Arizona put over 40 points on the scoreboard for two weeks in a row now.

Didn't drop by Dean's site yesterday so I did that as part of my waking up ritual this morning. Great post. I recommend it. All about the value of having the right writing group. If you just go to his site instead of clicking on this link, you'll have to scroll down when you get there.

I wrote the topic below, and now, as a thin line of pre-predawn blue draws across the eastern horizon, I'm turning to my writing 'puter. Back later with zults and results.

I wrote for awhile on "Desecration," a new story. Then I went outside for a little while, then came back in and created a new cover for the story. Then I remembered I needed to upload the four new covers I did earlier to my Short Fiction page on my website. There are now 107 covers on that page, including the cover for the story I'm writing today. (grin)

Finished "Desecration" and published it to D2D. That distributor provides an incredible experience. From the time I click Add New Book to the time I click Publish, it takes about 3 minutes.

Compare that to Amazon where the site seems to load FOREVER. And the process, when it's uninterrupted, takes around 20 minutes. Ugh. Smashwords falls somewhere between those two, but I'm not using Smashwords anymore. It isn't worth the effort. More on that in the topic tomorrow.

Topic of the Post: Revising Goals and Challenges

Some days you eat the bear, and some days the bear eats you. And that's fine, as long as you aren't dealing with, you know, an actual bear.

We set goals and challenges for a specific purpose. My purpose most often is to spur myself to greater heights with my writing. When the goal or challenge begins to falter in that purpose, it's time to draw back and take another look at it.

Can you do that? Of course. There are three overall truisms about goals and challenges:

If you achieve your goal, nothing happens except maybe you feel good for a little while.

If you DON'T achieve your goal, also nothing happens. Except maybe you say "Darn it" and try again when the goal resets.

But if you change your goal for whatever reason, something DOES happen. You are invigorated. You have given new life to your endeavor, and you have given yourself the little push you need to continue.

A few days ago, I wrote that I'm not fooling myself into believing I can actually meet my goal of writing 30 short stories during the month of September. For the record, that's 25 more short stories of at least 2,000 words each over the next 18 days (starting today). The problem is that "story" is not a set value.

If a "story" was exactly 2,000 words, I would know I have to write 50,000 words in the next 18 days. Is that doable? Absolutely. That's less than my former daily goal of 3000 words per day.

But a story isn't exactly 2,000 words. For example, the five I've written for the challenge thus far were 2485, 3213, 4329, 3174 and 2191 words. So I'm just sayin', there's not a real good chance I'm going to meet this goal and accomplish this challenge.

Still, I'm not quite ready to throw in the towel yet. To meet the goal and accomplish the challenge I have to write one story every day for the rest of the month PLUS seven stories. So for one week, I have to write two stories per day.

I finished my story for today AND created the cover and published it before noon. So I could easily write another story today, though I might not 'cause I might wimp out and watch football. (grin) Life happens, right? At least once a week.

But CAN I write two stories per day? Yep. As long as I think of them as "stories" instead of thinking of the number of words in them. It's almost impossible to write 10,000 words in a day. It isn't nearly as difficult to write two stories, both of which happen to be around 5,000 words long. (grin)

Now I do have a backup plan just in case I don't reach my goal, and if I have to invoke it, I'll even pay an appropriate penalty. But I'll tell you about that if I don't get 30 stories out on or before September 30.

Man, this is a lot of writing, isn't it? But will it hurt me in any way, shape or form?

Uhhh NO.

At the end of this period of insanity I will have a LOT more short stories in my personal canon and (MUCH more imporantly) I will have jumpstarted my writing habit again.

You just can't put a price on that.

My Current Challenge and Goal

Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write

anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing

A pretty good day. I wrote "Desecration" and got a good start on "The Day They Came" which feels like it's going to be science fiction. I should be able to finish it tomorrow and then write another one to go with it.

Fingers crossed. I need some two-story days. (grin)

Fiction Words: 3628

Writing of "Desecration" (short story)

Day 1..... 2191 words. Total words to date..... 2191 words (done)

Writing of "The Day They Came" (short story)

Day 1..... 1437 words. Total words to date..... 1437 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 5 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 16827
Total fiction words for the month..... 18417 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 483458

The Journal, Monday, 9/14: Farewell, Smashwords, and Why

Up right a little before 2 this morning. Email responses and playing catch up with a little reading filled the first half-hour of the day. I didn't drop by Dean's site a second time yesterday so I did that as part of my waking up ritual this morning.

By the way, if you haven't heard of Storybundle.com, check it out. I don't buy every bundle that comes out, but every now and then they have one I can't refuse. Basically, you pay what you want for a LOT of great reading.

The URL for the current bundle is http://storybundle.com/disasters. Once you sign up, they'll send you announcements of other bundles. And free stuff. Like right now, a free issue of Lightspeed Magazine. (grin)

Guess I'll write the topic now. Then I'll write fiction for awhile, and then a walk (finally, after a few days off).

Took longer to write the topic than I thought it would. Finally to writing.

I screwed up. I relented and let the little girl out this morning while it was still dark. Again, something scared the stuffing out of her. When I let her in she began racing through the house like she did two days

ago.

This time I corraled her quickly, brought her into my office and shut the door. But then I had to spend some time alternately catching her, petting her, telling her everything's all right. I shut the blinds on my two open windows so she couldn't see outside and that helped a lot. (Sure wish we could adjust our vision so we could see like they do at times.)

Still it took a good half-hour to calm her enough so I could open my office door without fear of her climbing to the top of the cabinets and inadvertently harming herself again. Now she's lying on a Navajo rug just outside my open office door so I can see her and she can see me. Three times she walked over here and rubbed against my legs while I'm typing. Just making sure I'm still here.

I understand. Fear is one of the very few universal emotions, something we all share on this little blue rock. And anyone who believes the other creatures on this planet are not "self-aware" is really stuck in the collective human 'holier-than-everything' attitude.

Back to my story for a bit before my walk.

Had a good walk of just over 5 miles, then back here to read Dean's post where I found exciting news. It was so good I threw together a special post over on my main blog and sent it out earlier today. See News Flash below.

Now back to my writing.

News Flash
Turns out ebooks are NOT declining as reported by traditional publishing's "big 5." Turns out, INDIE published ebooks are taking a lot larger market share. Ebook sales actually are INCREASING. Great news in this wonderful new world of publishing.

See for yourself at Author Earnings Report. Seriously, if you're a writer, you want to read and understand this.

I urge you also to visit the website of Dean Wesley Smith where he provides a brief discussion of this. Very interesting stuff.

Topic of the Post: Farewell, Smashwords, and Why
Yesterday I started the topic of the post with "Some days you eat the bear, and some days the bear eats you." That's true for today's post as well.

Back in 2011, during the first year of the "gold rush" of electronic publishing, I signed up for a Smashwords account. Today, I have 143 books (nonfiction, novels, short stories and collections) published with them.

When I finished a work, whatever it was, first I published it to Smashwords. I allowed them to distribute it for me to 12 of 13 sales venues (all but Amazon). Then I published it to Amazon.

Enter Draft2Digital http://draft2digital.com, a sleek new company that does what Smashwords does but MUCH more quickly and efficiently. They distribute to the same "big six" that Smashwords distributes to (Apple, B&N, Kobo, Inktera, Oyster, and Scribd) plus Tolino, a growing ebook store in Germany that was created specifically to rival Amazon.

Yesterday, I published a short story to D2D and Amazon, but for the first time, did NOT publish it to Smashwords. Why? Because then I'd have to clunk my way through the "opt out" radio buttons thirteen

times so Smashwords would not distribute it (because D2D is distributing it).

Now admittedly, if I HAD done all that, the story would still be available in the Smashwords store, and I'm always advising writers to sell in as many markets as possible. But the thing is, having to spend a half-hour clunking around on Smashwords' site just so a short story will be in their store... well, it simply isn't worth the time.

Another thing, through the Smashwords online store I've sold mostly nonfiction. And most of that I've sold when I've created coupons for it, and then advertised the coupons. Again, it's a lot of effort for very few sales.
I'm not lazy when it comes to expending necessary effort, but any time I spend uploading etc. is part of my investment in my writing. Since it's part of the investment, I have to consider what return the effort will yield.

Here are a few stark numbers:

- At Amazon.com it takes me about 15 minutes from clicking Create New Title to clicking Publish IF the process is uninterrupted by Amazon's ridiculous page-loading times and jumping around. Probably the average time is 20 to 25 minutes. However, Amazon is currently my best venue, so the frustration, while annoying, is worthwhile.
- At Smashwords.com it takes me about 10 minutes to go from entering the title of my book to clicking Publish at the bottom of the form.
    - But then I have to go to their ISBN Manager to assign an ISBN for distribution to some of the big six as well as several tiny library venues (where I've never sold a book).
    - Then I have to go to their Channel Manager. There I have to find my book (there are three pages) and then click thirteen "opt out" radio buttons one at a time so Smashwords will not distribute to anyone except the Smashwords.com online store.
    - Even after I've done all that, even though I've opted out of distribution to every place that requires an ISBN, I continue to see a message saying I need to assign an ISBN to my books. Very, very clunky system. I skip over the ISBN Manager since I no longer use them for distribution, but using the Channel Manager easily adds another 10 minutes and roughly half a ton of frustration to the process. Not worth it.
- And D2D. Ahh, D2D. At Draft2Digital.com it takes me about 3 minutes from Add New Book to Publish. On the final page I check the stores to which I want them to distribute my work (so seven checkmarks), verify that the work is either mine or that I have the rights to publish it, and I'm done. They assign an ISBN for the venues that require it, but I don't have to do anything with that.

D2D does for me what Smashwords does but in a lot less time and with absolutely zero frustration. Score!

So for me, it's bye-bye to Smashwords. I might put my major publications (novels, collections) up in their store, but frankly I doubt it. I really REALLY don't like having to "opt out" 13 times per publication.

Now I'm a fair guy, so I will be addressing this issue with Mark Coker soon. Well, relatively soon. I probably won't do so until I've moved my major nonfiction books over to D2D. Anyway, I'll keep you updated, but I think he's pretty entrenched in the way he does things.

So it's like this. Five years ago, he and his company were on the cutting edge of ebook publishing and distribution. Today they're eating dust from every other major player.

If you have any questions about any of this, I'd be happy to try to answer them for you. Please ask in the comments section below.

My Current Challenge and Goal
Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the

challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
Well enough, I guess, but I was on this particular story much longer than I wanted to be. A lot of cycling back on this one as it kept twisting and turning. A lot of fun though. I hoped to finish this one today and write another, but I'll have to save that for another day.

Fiction Words: 2511

Writing of "The Day They Came" (short story)
Day 1..... 1437 words. Total words to date..... 1437 words
Day 2..... 2511 words. Total words to date..... 3948 words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 6 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 19338
Total fiction words for the month..... 20928 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 485969

September 15, 2015

Up right at 2 this morning at my little girl's insistence. It's all good. She's a good baby.

I'm being lazy this morning. It took me over an hour to email a response to a lady who runs a nonprofit. Stuff about how to do things on her WordPress website. Yep, I still haven't learned. Well, they either take the advice or they don't. It isn't like I'm getting royalties. Yawn.

I saw a video (posted it on my Facebook this morning) in which a guy hung out on a street corner. To passersby, he offered, absolutely free, either a large bar of Hershey's chocolate or a silver ingot worth $150. In every case, they could take either one. In every case, they chose the chocolate. Oh yes, yes. I know those people. Sigh.

I also heard a classic this morning from a respondent (and I am paraphrasing the dialogue here): "Y'know, I offered this incredibly helpful product of mine absolutely free to 1,000 people and not one of them took me up on it. Guess I need to offer it to a lot larger group."

Yeah, okay. That'll work. Seriously? Shrug. Everybody needs a hobby.

No walk today at all. Just being and writing.

Okay, listen closely. Here, come closer. I gotta whisper so my subconscious doesn't hear me. Ready?

My short stories do not want me to meet my goal and accomplish my challenge this month. I swear they're against me.

Here I am needing to write two per day, and the stories are coming out longer and longer. I won't be able to write two a day when each story is 4000 words or thereabouts, despite what I said a few days ago when I was feeling very cavalier about the whole thing.

Ugh. So I'm just gonna do what I always do at a time like this: remember to have fun. Writing isn't work. It's fun. If it was work, I'd find something else to do. I know I would, 'cause I've seen me do it. So I'm gonna have fun and enjoy the characters and what they say and do. The goal and the challenge are secondary. The characters and the fun come first.

I hope that's how you look at your writing too. Remind yourself to have fun. Run and play with your friends.

Anyway, I posted the story I finished yesterday as next Monday's story of the week. It's the first SF I've written in awhile, and I even like it.

This morning I wrote for awhile on a new one, then got a shower and ate a little breakfast, then came back to writing. Then I played with my kitten for awhile (she's sleeping in the window now) and came back to writing again.

As I'm writing this, I'm also eating lunch, and then I'll go back to writing.

Currently in my challenge, I've written 6 stories out of 30. Today is the 15th. That leaves me 16 days (including today) to write 24 short stories. That means I have to write one short story every day, and on 8 days I have to write two. Yeah, well… we'll see. (grin)

Well, I guess the number's gonna stay at 6 for another day. If so, beginning tomorrow I have to write one new story every day plus two stories on nine days. Hmmm.

Topic of the Post: No topic today beyond what I wrote above about having fun.

My Current Challenge and Goal
Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
Well, the trend continues. And this one might actually be the beginning of a novella or novel. I honestly don't know. I only know it feels like the end is nowhere in sight, so this one might be around for awhile even as I write other short stories past it. At least I'm havin' fun. (grin)

Fiction Words: 3405

Writing of "The Singeing of Norval Babineaux" (short story or something)
Day 1…… 3405 words. Total words to date….. 3405 words
Day 2…… XXXX words. Total words to date….. XXXX words (done)

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and

maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month…… 6 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month…… 22743
Total fiction words for the month…….. 24333 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year…….. 489374

September 16, 2015

Well, rolled out a little before 2 this morning. I was wide awake when I got up, but I've been tired most of the day.

My hobby is photography. I started it mostly so I could take my own cover shots for my books. I have a decent DSLR (Sony SLT A65) and some limited knowledge how to take good pics. Like writing, it takes practice more than anything else.

But I have very limited technical knowledge re the mechanical inner workings. Recently the image sensor in my camera got some dust on it, and of course those show up in the pics.

I don't like to doctor pictures after I take them, so I had to find a way to clean the camera without damaging it.

Finally this morning I took a couple hours to find the right manual online. Downloaded it, read the instructions, cleaned the image sensor (first automatically, then tested it, then manually) and the next shot I took was clean. Score!

No walk today again. Just being and writing and overcoming the sense that I want to go to sleep for awhile.

Anyway, after cleaning the camera and writing this and the topic below, I moved over to the writing computer to spend some more time with Norval Babineaux.

Topic of the Post: Challenges
Yesterday I got flippant and said my short stories don't want me to meet my goal. That was my way of saying the stories are in command. Which is another way of saying my subconscious is in command.

Now that's great for word count goals, but not necessarily so much for the goal of writing a complete short story (or two) every day or the current challenge of completing 30 short stories by the end of this month. But although goals and challenges are wonderful motivators, the key to writing both well and prolifically is to have fun. That was kind of my point yesterday. Sorry for the flippancy and any confusion.

Anyway, back to challenges. Do any of you have any ongoing challenges? Have you set any recurring writing goals? If so, have you broadcast it to others whom you know will support your efforts?

I hope it's all of the above. If not, I urge you to give it a shot. For one thing, it's a great deal of fun. For another, I won't be quite so alone in my insanity. (grin)

If you need an additional motivation, Ray Bradbury himself advised those who would be writers to write at least a thousand words a day, every day. Of course, a lot of times you'll go over that amount. There's always a story or a chapter or a scene to finish.

Anyway, as I wrote in a response to a comment yesterday, my current challenge is more tongue in cheek at this point than realistic for me. That doesn't mean some of you couldn't do it. Beginning today and in the next 15 days I would have to write 24 short stories. So that's one short story every day plus an extra short story on nine days. Possible? Yes. Probable or even plausible (for me)? Nuh uh.

Still, I'll leave it in place until I come up with something better. Which is probably going to be in the next few days.(grin)

My Current Challenge and Goal
Before October 1, I will write at least 30 new short stories, one for each day in September. To satisfy the challenge, these have to be actual short stories, meaning they have to be over 2,000 words. If I write anything shorter than that, it will count on my numbers but not toward the challenge. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
Well, not as much as I'd liked. I'm just worn to a frazzle tired so I'm stopping a bit early. I have time for about another 1500 words, but I don't have the brain for it.

Fiction Words: 2509

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (not sure what this is gonna be)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Writing of "Curious Shapes" (short story)
Day 1..... 1022 words. Total words to date..... 1022 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

One thing about these stories — I just have to write them. I don't have to rush to slap a cover on them and publish them. All of that's going to come later, although I will pick one each week to be the story for that week. At the end of the month if I'm successful in my challenge I should have 40 publications: 30 individual stories, six 5-story collections, three 10-story collections, and maybe one book titled The Stories of September.

Total challenge stories for the month..... 6 (Goal is 30)
Total challenge words for the month..... 25252
Total fiction words for the month..... 26842 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 491883

September 17, 2015

When asked what advice he would give new writers, Ray Bradbury said, "Write at least a thousand words a day for ten years. Write at least a short story every week of your life, or its equivalent in essay form, play form or the novel. ... Habit is everything. Learning one's craft is locked into habit." So there you go.

Got a good night's sleep last night despite the idiot dog across the way doing his bark-at-nothing thing at regular intervals. Rolled out right at 3 to begin the day.

Slipping a bit in my ongoing retraining, so I'm retooling again. I always check email first thing while I'm waking up, read news stories, etc. But recently I've been responding to lengthy emails from a person who asks a lot of questions.

Now I'm not blaming the person for asking, so don't get me wrong. I could always just say something like "Sorry, I don't have time for this." But I'm trying to help, trying to share my own knowledge and experience, so I don't mind. And if you know me at all, you know I usually go overboard with my answers to be sure I answer the question thoroughly. So totally my fault.

This morning I received an email like that with nine numbered questions. To save a little time scrolling up and down I opened a Notepad document, listed 1-9 down the side, then wrote my responses.

It still ate an hour and a half out of my day. Granted it was almost a thousand words (I checked only for purposes of this post), and that many words of nonfiction from the conscious mind in an hour and a half

is pretty much blazing speed, at least for me. But I allowed my response to eat about 1500 words worth of my fiction-writing time. And I'll lose more time too. Time that I can't afford to lose.

The problem is that once I'm working in my conscious, critical mind, it takes awhile to get back into the free-flowing subconscious creative mind.

So I'm tweaking my retraining schedule again. Beginning tomorrow morning, I'll still check email, read news items etc. to wake up as always. I'll even respond to some email, but long stuff or stuff that I feel requires a long response will have to wait until the end of my day.

Oh, beginning tomorrow also, this post will go out later in the evening. I'll try 6 for awhile. If that doesn't give me enough leeway, I'll raise it to 7.

Now about the conscious mind. One of the primary functions of the conscious mind is to protect you. If you're about to lean your hand on the hot burner of a stove, the conscious mind is what causes you to feel the heat and jerk your hand away. The conscious mind is what causes you to sense the edge of a cliff is near and back off. (The subconcious mind would say, "Go ahead! Might be a trip!")

For a writer, the conscious mind invokes every writing myth you ever heard in an attempt to stop you from writing. (If you don't finish what you're writing, you can't submit it or publish it and you won't be "hurt" by rejection or criticism. This is why we don't mind outlining or plotting or thinking about writing or just rewriting and "polishing" ad nauseam.)

And the critical conscious mind is wily in that regard. Notice, I recently (only a few days ago) had retrained myself to take no more than a half-hour of waking-up time before turning to the writing computer. Enter this correspondent, and suddenly I'm taking an hour and a half to two hours. Nicely played, conscious mind. (grin) But I'm putting a stop to it.

So how do you beat the conscious, critical mind? You take a personal oath to adhere to Heinlein's Rules. Then when you realize you've fallen off, you wag your finger at your conscious mind, set it back in the corner where it's supposed to be, and get back on Heinlein's Rules.

You must write.
You must finish what you write.
You must not rewrite.
You must publish what you write so people can buy it.
You must keep it published so more people can buy it.
I've been falling down on Rule 2 lately. Why? Because my conscious mind keeps wanting to know where the story is going in advance. So I have to clear that away, start another story, write an opening and see where it goes.

I have to stop "thinking" and Just Write the Next Sentence. Now I'm putting all this here so you can see that if you have to battle this stuff, you aren't alone. I battle it too.

Okay, so I wrote that response to my correspondent, and that siphoned me into using my conscious, critical mind. Since I was drowning in the CCM anyway, I came here to write this. And now four hours of the day are gone.

Now I'm gonna take a bit of time to adjust my head. Maybe I'll read a little more Bradbury or something (it motivates me), and then it's to the writing computer. I'll see you again this afternoon when it's time to post this.

By the way, I'm officially calling time of death on my 30-short-stories-by-September-30 challenge.

Did some reading and a few other things, and now, a full six hours after I got out of bed, I'm finally starting my fiction writing. That is completely unsatisfactory. Sometimes there are valid reasons not to write. Today is not of of those days.

My Current Goals and Challenge
My goals remain to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and at least one short story per week. I probably will announce a new challenge soon. I do still want to stay in my retraining though, and writing short stories is the best way to do that right now. Stay tuned.

Topic of the Post: Nothing beyond what I wrote above.

Today's Writing
Well, nothing like I wanted. Frankly, the fact that I started this post with that particular Bradbury quote is the only thing that made me write fiction today. I couldn't break free of all the crap in my head. I'll have it back tomorrow, I guess. I did write that foreword that was requested (1285 words) plus that long email earlier (1000) plus this (over 1200), so over 3000 words of non fiction. But very little fiction. Like I said, I'll be back on it tomorrow.

Fiction Words: 1458

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (not sure what this is gonna be)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Writing of "Curious Shapes" (short story)
Day 1..... 1022 words. Total words to date..... 1022 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

Writing of "Nick Mansione" (short story)
Day 1..... 1458 words. Total words to date..... 1458 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 28300 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 493341

September 18, 2015
Well, as you can see, I decided to skip straight to 7 p.m. with this blog.

In the ongoing email nonsense, stupid me, I did it again. I rolled out at 2:30, fired up to write. I got my coffee, checked email. Then I spent over an hour responding to one. Ugh. That's okay. It's the last one.

And this was completely my fault. I can't control what others ask. I can control only my response. Okay, now I can check that re-re-re-realization off my to-do list.

Hey folks, if you wanna share jokes, pictures, or other sillinesses with me, that's all well and good. I need a break like everybody else.

But if you ask me a series of serious questions only to set me up for "sparring" via email because you think it's fun? No. Don't do that. I will wish bad things for you.

I don't do light banter and sparring for fun about writing. I will give you my own proven best advice. You take it, you don't, no worries. But ask because you seriously want to learn, and at least consider what I send back.

Don't do it just as a juvenile exercise in verbal sparring. That's just annoying.

Of course, if you would do that in the first place, you wouldn't be signed up for my blog(s).

Listen, if any of you have not yet read Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing and Killing the Sacred Cows

of Indie Publishing, I strongly advise you to do so. You can find both of them free, every chapter, at http://deanwesleysmith.com/killing-the-sacred-cows-of-publishing/. Eventually he'll take them down, so I hope you'll go read them when you can. You could even save them into a Word document or something so you can look at them from time to time.

Well, as I said, I'm tweaking my retraining schedule again. No walking again today. Writing. Only writing and little breaks.

Yesterday I called time of death on my 30-short-stories-by-September-30 challenge. That was stupid. I still have time, and it's still possible if I stop being a moron and misusing my time. So it's back on. Yeah, I know. Indecisive. Hey, I'm showing you all of it, not just the good stuff.

Again Dean showed me exactly what I needed to hear at exactly the right time in his Topic today. He's talking about his own challenge to write ten books in the last four months of this year. It took him 17 days to write the first one, so he's behind a bit. He wrote, "So what am I going to do now that the first book of the ten took longer to write than expected? Write the next book, that's what. It is a very long time between now and the end of the year."

See? Isn't that perfect?

My Current Goals and Challenge
My goals remain to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and at least one short story per week. I still also intend to write 30 short stories before October 1. I have a ways to go on that one. (grin) Stay tuned.

Topic of the Post: Priorities and Choices
As you know (ad nauseam) I encourage those who would be writers to consciously set priorities. And you do set your own priorities, period.

Yes, I know other people and sitautions are affected, but barring absolute emergencies (the house is on fire, etc.) you still set your own priorities. If you make playing golf once a week your priority, then that's what you do.

Then once your priorities are set, you still have choices to make.

Let's say playing golf is your number one priority on Sunday. But on Friday, a good friend calls and asks you to bring your pickup and your trailer and help him move across town.

Well then you have a choice to make. Choices are up to you too. Do you say Sorry, but this is my golf day, or do you say, Sure, I'll be right over? Up to you.

What brought this up? I said to a recent correspondent that if someone decides they WANT to write, after that it's a matter of sitting down and writing. The correspondent maintains that some people really want to write, but they don't because they have no choice.

Sorry. That's pure, unadulterated bull cookies.

It's all a matter of Priorities and Choices.

Writing is something a guy really wants to do. He goes so far as to carve out time to do so, say one hour per day for five days per week.

But when the time rolls around for him to write, he chooses to mow the yard instead. Or he chooses to accompany his wife to the grocery. Or he chooses to watch a sporting event. Or he chooses to help his friend move across town.

Then later when his writer friends ask how his writing is coming, he says, "Oh, I didn't write anything this

week. I had to [fill in the blank]. I really had no choice. But I'll get it next week.

No, he won't.

The point is, it's always something.

Sorry, but I'm just not buying it. Been there, lived it, succumbed to and overcame all the writer's fears, and I'm still here.

If you couldn't tell, "I had no choice" is way up there on my list of detested complaints. If you want to do something, do it. If you don't, don't. Shrug. Seriously, with very few exceptions it really is that simple.

(Oh goodness. I'd really like to finish this story right now, but the house is on fire and the door to my office is getting hotter as I speak. Maybe I ought'a go out the window, with my writing computer, of course.)

Okay, enough of this. I've been up almost 3 hours. To the stories.

Today's Writing
Today I learned two things. One, writing really is easy when you remember to trust your subconscious. (Doh!)

That is, it's really easy when you just sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write whatever comes. Don't try to figure out what's gonna happen next, etc. Let the story tell you, through your fingers, what DID happen next. (This is Writing Off Into the Dark).

And two, I learned that the story I'm writing about Norval Babineaux is NOT a literary short story about the Cajun culture set in Louisiana. In fact, one'a my characters, a woman named Marie Babineaux, put her hands on her hips, jutted out her chin, and said, "Hey you. This here ain't no simple little Cajun thing, no. This here is one'a them complex deals. This here is mo' complex than a fi'ty cent sale at the Dollah Sto' when you ain't got nothin' but fo'ty-nine pennies. You see what I'm sayin'?" Then she snapped her fingers in front of my nose. "Hey, hey! Earth to Harvey. Get on the stick, Dude. I gotta get outta here an' get in the stores. No more'a this sittin' aroun', you."

It is a science fiction novella or novel that BEGINS in Louisiana and spreads around the world. It might be the first book of a saga or series. Holy cow. And I thought my next longer work would be either the 9th book of the Wes Crowley saga or the first book in a detective series. Go figure. What wonderful fun!

Fiction Words: 4139

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (umm, novel)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 4139 words. Total words to date..... 9031 words

Writing of "Curious Shapes" (short story)
Day 1..... 1022 words. Total words to date..... 1022 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

Writing of "Nick Mansione" (short story)
Day 1..... 1458 words. Total words to date..... 1458 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 32439 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 497480

Tomorrow I break a half-million words for the year! Woohoo!

September 19, 2015

Rolled out at 2:30 again, fired up to write. I got my coffee, checked email, and an aphorism sprang to mind. I wrote that one in a "Quotations" text document I keep, and it birthed another one. That happened several more times, along with the necessary revisions, and then I went to another file I've kept for years: definitions.

I spent some time there, writing a few new definitions and transfering some older ones to my list of quotations. Before I was finished, two and a half hours had passed. So I was writing within a half hour of getting out of bed, but not on the novel. Yet. (grin)

Then I came here. More in the topic below on aphorisms. Hope you enjoy it.

Had a necessary trip to Sierra Vista today (about three hours). I planned to write for awhile first, but we went sooner than I expected. Got back, pulled up the novel, wrote about a hundred words, and remembered My Team (LSU) might be playing today.

Looked them up online. Sure enough, Auburn at LSU was on, halfway through the 3rd quarter. The score was lopsided. Well, there was only a quarter and a half left, so I went to watch it. (grin)

Hey, priorities right? The novel is going really smoothly right now. I'll have a bit of time to write after the game, and I'll write for a few hours in the morning before I go to Tucson.

By the way, I'll be at the SSA Forum tomorrow at around 10 a.m. That's at the Tucson City Center InnSuites Resort, 475 N. Granada. Primarily I'll be there to visit and to announce four new all day seminars. Hope to see some of you there.

Okay, went back to the game for a bit, and LSU beat Auburn 45 – 21. Geaux Tigers. (grin)

Now to the novel for awhile. Then I'll come back and post my numbers.

My Current Goals and Challenge
My goals remain to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and at least one short story per week. I still also intend to write 30 short stories before October 1. I have a ways to go on that one. (grin) Stay tuned.

Topic of the Post: Fun with Aphorisms
"Aphorism" is defined by dictionary.com as "a short pithy saying expressing a general truth." My aphorisms sometimes come out as definitions (ala Ambrose Bierce) and are most often satirical. Here are a dozen of mine. Remember, these are tongue in cheek:

- apology, n. A device intended to soothe wounds and thereby put a victim off his guard; a precursor to the next offense.
- arrogance, n. ignorance advertised.
- common sense, n. A myth. What's common to some is obviously a luxury to most.
- human, n. 1. The most conceited animal on earth, unjustifiably so.
- intellectual, n. 1. One who will drive a Hummer six blocks to a Save the Ozone rally. 2. A closet tuna-eater.
- intolerance, n. Proof of an atrophied mind and a lazy disposition.
- kindness, n. An imagined effect created by hopeful expectation. The word itself never issues forth from one whose lips the word has crossed, except to convey superiority.
- opinion, n. Offered as it is from a single point of view, a meaningless group of words to anyone but the author.
- patience, n. A pliable substance that wears thin when it's most needed.
- protestor, n. 1. One who exercises the right to dissent, provided him by a patriot, against whom he

most often dissents. 2. One who, lacking a cause, will create a posterboard sign decrying the lack of causes and picket the nearest conservative.

- question, n. Because it stirs thought, the only truly important grouping of words in any language.
- victim, n. In our society, the person held responsible for the crime perpetuated against him.

And a few straight aphorisms:

- Failure is only practice for success.
- The right to free speech does not include the right to an audience.
- The one thing I cannot tolerate is intolerance.

How about you? Do you write aphorisms? It's a fun exercise and a great way to keep the brain pan lubricated.

Today's Writing
Didn't write as much today on the novel as I expected to. I could have written more this early a.m. I could have written for the hour or so that I was watching LSU football.

No biggie. Sometimes I allow things to interfere. I know I'll be gone much of tomorrow, so I'll hit it early and hard before I leave in the morning. (By the time I leave for Tucson, I will have been up 6 or 7 hours.)

So I screwed around today a little too much. Because of that I missed going over the half-million mark for the year. (grin) Bad, bad Harvey.

Fiction Words: 1516

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (umm, novel)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 4139 words. Total words to date..... 9031 words
Day 4..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 10547 words

Writing of "Curious Shapes" (short story)
Day 1..... 1022 words. Total words to date..... 1022 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

Writing of "Nick Mansione" (short story)
Day 1..... 1458 words. Total words to date..... 1458 words
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 33955 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... 498996

Well, I'll go over the half-million mark tomorrow then. Easily. (grin)

September 20, 2015

Rolled out around 1:30. Answered some emails, then came here to write this, then to the novel. I'm going to Tucson this morning, so I want to get some done on the novel before I go.

Probably you've noticed I'm not doing more on short stories right now. I will, but the challenge is definitely kaput since the novel popped up. Just the way it is. The story of the week for tomorrow is already pre-posted. So sometime after tomorrow I'll write the story for next Monday (28th).

I can leave a novel to write a short story, then return to the novel. I can do that. But I can't leave a novel to write a bunch of short stories and then come back to the novel with the same fire. And novels sell better than short stories, plus I want to see what happens in the novel, so there y'go.

Leaving for Tucson around 9:15, so in the shower by 8:30, so I can write and do whatever else from the time I finish this until around 8. The extra half-hour gives me time to leave a jagged edge on the story to prep for when I come back.

Leaving a jagged edge is some of the simplest and best writing advice I ever received. I got it from SF

writer CJ Cherryh when I heard her speak at Eastern NM University in Portales, NM.

Simply put, it means don't stop writing at a clear, clean break. For example, before you stop writing for the day, you might put your character in the shower.

When you come back to the story later, you'll have to get the character out of the shower before you can write anything else, and that will get you back into the flow. Or maybe the character being in the shower when you come back will send through your fingers a scene that results from the character having been in the shower.

Perhaps you'll open with a scene in a restaurant (he showered to get ready to go to the restaurant) or a business meeting or whatever.

I'm sure you get the idea.

Okay, it's not quite 3 a.m., so on to the novel for awhile. Then I'll come back and post my numbers, all before 8:30. If I get a chance to write more after I get back, then I'll change the numbers and this post. If not, it will be good to go.

My Current Goals and Challenge
My goals are to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and at least one short story per week. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
After a good session on the novel, I added a few more posts (pre-posted) to my other blog, then came back to the novel. When I left for Tucson, I had written 2942 words in two long sessions.

Weird missing my daily goal by only 58 words, but not that big a deal, right? I got involved in some other stuff after Tucson and didn't get back to writing today. However, tomorrow is a new 3000-word daily goal.

Also kind of a great feeling knowing I'm well over a half-million words so far on the year. (grin)

I'm removing the short stories I was reporting on earlier. I'll put them back when I write on them again. Much as I enjoy writing short stories, I have to admit it feels really good to be working on another novel. Kind of in a race with myself. (grin)

Fiction Words: 2942

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (novel)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 4139 words. Total words to date..... 9031 words
Day 4..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 10547 words
Day 5..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 13489 words (2942 before Tucson)

Total fiction words for the month..... 36897 (1590 on Wes)
Total fiction words for the year..... **501938** (Woohoo!)

In case anyone's wondering (I was), I've also written 155,419 words on this blog. That doesn't count emails or my "main" blog that comes out every ten days. So total word count of published fiction and this blog since 1 January 2015 is 657,357 words. (grin)

I tagged DWS in this because if it weren't for him, I would never have achieved this. So just in case you get a ping back or something. Thanks, Dean.

The Journal, Monday, 9/21: Streaks

Rolled out around 2:30. Answered some emails, then just messed around awhile with Facebook and watching the weather come north.

My short story of the week, The Day They Came, will post today. I hope you'll enjoy it if you're in an SF frame of mind. For me, that's the signal that I need to write a short story to post next Monday.

Okay, I'm gonna talk about streaks again. Why? Because they're important. They're important because they're powerful, unless you're stupid enough to strip them of their power for some silly reason.

I had a great streak going. I wrote and posted at least one short story per week for 69 weeks. In all, I wrote 71 stories during that time. Quite a streak. Even DWS said it was one of the longer ones he'd heard of.

Then I stopped. The streak ended with "Death of a Persona." No excuse. It isn't like I wasn't able to keep it going. For some stupid reason I just decided to end it.

I kept posting one story a week in the interim (some of my magic realism stuff), and on Monday, August 10 I started a new challenge and a new streak with "Pete and Repeat." No, that isn't right. I just checked. The week after I wrote and published "Pete and Repeat," I posted another older one, another MR story.

So my new streak began the following week, September 7, with "Paper Hearts." So next Monday will be the fourth week in a row that I've written and published a new short story in this new streak.

Hey, it's all good. Y'gotta start somewhere. Anyone wanna join me?

My short-term goal with this one is to write and publish at least one new short story for 70 weeks in a row, surpassing my previous streak. My long-term goal is to take Bradbury up on a dare: write and publish at least one new short story every week for the rest of my life. And yes, I hope I hit the short-term goal a LOT sooner than I hit the long-term one. (grin)

Plus sometime in the future I want to duplicate DWS' feat by writing one short story every day for a month. (grin)

Okay, when you get about two minutes, maybe three, check out this very well done cartoon strip on Dreaming vs. Doing. I think you'll enjoy it. http://zenpencils.com/comic/161-shonda-rhimes-a-screenwriters-advice/

Slowing down again for some reason today. With all the drizzle, I thought this would be a great day for writing. Yet at this point (10:30) I've written just over 1000 new words.

My Current Goals and Challenge

My goals are to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and at least one short story per week. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing

Well, after a slow start, the novel surged forward. I also found two new POV characters. What else can I say? This is the most fun I think I've ever had. (grin)

Fiction Words: 4261

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (SF novel)

Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 4139 words. Total words to date..... 9031 words
Day 4..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 10547 words
Day 5..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 13489 words
Day 6..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 17750 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 41158

Total fiction words for the year..... 506199

The Journal, Tuesday, 9/22: Writing Fast

Rolled out just before 3. Answered some emails, then just messed around awhile (again) with Facebook. I'm gonna have to stay off Facebook, by which I mean take it in very limited doses.

Yesterday as a writer who was currently, you know, writing, I wondered aloud in a Facebook post how

many other writers were writing on their own WIPs at the same time. If they were, I asked them to click Like or comment if they wanted to.

A few did. That was great. It was what I was looking for.

Then a woman who is a Realtor posted that she was writing contracts. Does that count? Hahaha. That wasn't too bad. Later she took some 7-question test on Facebook and it told her she was an "author." So she came back to post that. See? I'm an author. Hahaha. Wonderful! Great fun, right?

Ummm no. Not for me. Now, is that all right? Or does it make me some sort of antisocial old grouch? Either way, I'm good with it.

I mean, say a Realtor had posted to Facebook that she was currently writing a contract and wondered how many other Realtors in the area were doing the same thing at that moment. And say I happened across that post. I can promise you, it wouldn't even have occurred to me to write "Hey, I showed a friend a house as we were driving by it last week. Does that count? Hahaha."

But I understand some folks are just bent in that particular direction. It's fine. Whatever. I was nice enough, I guess. I just clicked Like on her comment and left it at that.

Okay (deep breath), time for the weather report. We're supposed to have more rain from some tropical storm down in Baja today but I'm not seeing anything on radar. Except the stuff that pops up pretty much every day around Hermosillo.

So around 6 I got out of here for a walk. I logged 5 miles and was sleet-rained-on only the last tenth of a mile. I'll take it. (grin)

Wait. I used my feet and legs to perambulate down the road. I guess that would make me a part-time marathoner. (grin)

No, really, c'mon, I'm over it. Seriously. Besides, I'm gonna go gas up my car later today, which is good, 'cause I always wanted to be a mechanic. (grin)

Okay, I think I'm finished now.

No wonder I enjoy writing so much. My manuscript is chock full of people who are intelligent, not afraid to take chances, and even enjoy my company. And they're as serious as I am.

Yesterday all three of my blogs were sent out. My "main" blog posted because it was the 21st. My free short story of the week posted because it was a Monday, and then of course this one goes out every day.

Yesterday also I talked about streaks. If any of you are doing goals/challenges/streaks I'd really like to hear about it. Use the comments section below to brag a little. Tell the rest of us what's possible.

Still trying to think of a good way to combine this blog with the main blog. But I have a little voice way in the back of my head too that says not to do that. I mean, specifically, not to advertise my numbers or my writing process to the world. Of course, most of those who read my blogs are writers or would-be writers.

Unfortunately, most writers are among those who have bought into the myth that writing "fast" means writing poorly. In actuality, as some of you know, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Judging from comments of others (readers) I have never written better than after I gave it all over to my subconscious and started writing off into the dark. That just means writing without planning, outlining, plotting, etc.

How fast someone writes has nothing to do with quality. Nothing.

In fact, "writing fast" is actually a misnomer. Most writers who Just Write do so at a rate of about 850 to 1000 publishable words of fiction per hour. (1000 words per hour is only 17 words per minute.)

Even if a writer spends only ONE HOUR per day writing, and even if he writes only five days per week, and if he takes two weeks off completely per year (vacation), he still will have written 250,000 words in a year and be considered a "fast" writer. (One thousand words per day multiplied times five days per week equals 5,000 words multiplied times fifty weeks equals 250,000 words. That's five 50,000 word novels.)

And that's if you spend only one hour per day doing your job. (grin)

Imagine what you could turn out if you spent four hours per day doing your job. Can you imagine any other job in the world in which you can spend considerably less than eight hours per day and yet be considered prolific?

At a writers' meeting a couple days ago, the president of the group said to me (being convivial) "Three thousand words before you came in this morning. That's really impressive."

I appreciated it, but really? I mean, if I call myself a "writer," shouldn't I spend time doing my job?

Okay, I'm just gonna go ahead and go there for a moment. What if I spent eight hours per day doing my job five days per week like most people do? That would be 8000 words per day and 40,000 words per week.

Even if I took a two-week vacation every year, I would turn out TWO MILLION WORDS PER YEAR. Using the same 50,000 words as the basis for a novel, that would be FORTY novels. Now THAT would be prolific.
But even then I wouldn't be a "fast" writer. I'd just be a writer with a work ethic.

I recommend you read the Topic of the Night in DWS' blog athttp://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-voice-starts/. Very interesting for anyone who thinks of writing (correctly) as a business.

My Current Goals and Challenge
My goals are to write 3,000 words of publishable fiction per day and at least one short story per week. Stay tuned.

Today's Writing
No real writing today. I mean, I wrote some but I'm not even gonna count it. Completely blew off my daily goal. I think after a few days of not walking, my walk kind of threw me off my rhythm this morning.

I had a good title for a short story in mind, so I wrote an opening. It didn't work out. I went back to the novel, but didn't quite get into the right frame of mind for it, so I knew enough to just stay hands-off.

This turned into a non-writing day. I'd much rather have a 'day on,' but some days just do what they want. So after a couple of really good days, the numbers will remain where they are until tomorrow.

And tomorrow will be challenging. I have to take my truck to SV for repair in the morning. So I need to hit the 'puter running in the morning on the novel at least. Maybe I can get a few thousand done before I have to go over there. We'll see.

Fiction Words: XXXX

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (SF novel)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 4139 words. Total words to date..... 9031 words
Day 4..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 10547 words
Day 5..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 13489 words
Day 6..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 17750 words
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 41158
Total fiction words for the year..... 506199

The Journal, Wednesday, 9/23: A BIG Author Earnings Report

Rolled out just before 3 again, a little late this morning. I was hoping to get up around 1 so I could get a lot done before I have to go to SV but that wasn't in the cards. I'll just have to spread the writing out.

Answered some emails, then Facebook stuff.

From a comment by Dean on his blog from yesterday: "There is a huge difference between writing for one reader (those who submit to traditional publishing) and writing for thousands (those who go indie). A real change in mindset."

And from his post today, “Every beginning writer and many middle-stage writers work to fit into a box, to be like everyone else, to polish their stories and novels until they look like everyone else’s stores.” Good stuff.

So a little over two hours have passed this morning and I haven’t written a word of fiction.

Finally got started writing at 5:30. I hoped to get at least one good session done before I left for SV around 8.

It worked out better than that. First I cycled back a bit to update a couple of points and to get myself back into the flow of the story. Then I wrote about 1100 words before 6:30. I took a break for a shower and to get dressed, then wrote another 1000 words before I had to leave. That’s perfect. It makes the trip to SV basically a long break. (grin)

Well, it’s noon. The trip took longer than expected because some things came up on the other end. My mechanic also operates a towing service, so I went with him on a couple calls. Got back to his place, he installed my new part, then realized a second part also was broken. So I’ll go back Monday. In the meantime, the truck works. It just limps a little. (grin)

By the way, Author Earnings just released a new report that ALL writers should see. Especially if you’re locked into traditional publishing or if you’re on the fence.

The previous report I mentioned here talks about market share in ebooks from traditional publishing vs. indie publishing. So it was kind of abstract.

But this report shows ***the actual distribution of income to individual authors*** who choose to publish traditionally vs. independently. This probably will surprise you. And if you’re an indie publisher, it will surprise you in a very good way.

http://authorearnings.com/report/individual-author-earnings-tracked-across-7-quarters-feb-2014-sept-2015/. I encourage you to follow this link and sign up to get your own reports as they come out.

Adding to My Challenge
Sort of, I guess, but not really. There are 99 days left in 2015. If I hit my daily goal of 3000 publishable words of fiction per day for all 99 days, that will be an additional 297,000 words. That would give me well over 800,000 words of published fiction on the year. So be it. My new short-term goal is to hit at least 800,000 words for this year. (To hit that exact number I need 290762 more words, or 2936 words per day. Here we go! (grin)

Today’s Writing
Kind of lethargic after I got back from SV. Over 2,000 words before 8 a.m. The rest came after noon and before 4 p.m. when NYPD Blue comes on. Oh well. Still it was at least a so-so day. I hit the goal and looking forward to tomorrow. And sometime in the next few days I have to write and publish a short story. (grin)

Fiction Words: 3039

Writing of “Norval Babineaux” (SF novel)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 4139 words. Total words to date..... 9031 words
Day 4..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 10547 words
Day 5..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 13489 words
Day 6..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 17750 words
Day 7..... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 20789 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 44197
Total fiction words for the year..... 509238

The Journal, Thursday, 9/24: Conjoined Stories

Rolled out early, a few minutes after 1. One of my sons dropped by on his way from California to New

Mexico (return trip). We visited for an hour or so before I went to bed. He was up and back on the road at around 3. Enjoyed seeing him but any visit messes up the routine a bit.

I was going to walk later this morning, but I'm not feeling well. Nothing serious. Just blah. Sometimes I have a day that just feels like a do-nothing day. This might be one of those. Then again, I never know how it will turn out if I just put my fingers on the keyboard.

It's now a few hours later. Very odd day with the writing. I write a little, go do something else. Write a little more, go do something else. Whatever I accomplish today will be done in increments of 15 minutes to a half hour.

The story's going fairly well, flowing and all that, but weird. Something's wrong. That quiet little creative voice in the back of my mind is telling me so. Hmm. I think maybe that's why everything's coming in bits and starts this morning.

Well, until that little voice lets me in on the secret, guess I'll just keep at it. (grin)

Ah! I figured it out. I had heard of this, but I'd never had it happen to me, at least that I can remember. I was writing two stories at one time.

The story about "Norval Babineaux" is going to be a short story or maybe a novella at most. But at about 5,000 words in, the characters in that story handed me another story that's going to be a novel, only they aren't in it. How weird is that?

When I'd written around a thousand words today, the separation between the short story and the novel suddenly became apparent. So I cut the short story out of the novel and adjusted the total for the novel.

That's reflected in the numbers below.

It was fairly easy to separate the two because once the larger story took off (on the third day) all but 339 words were on the novel. (grin) Man I hate math. Well, math that doesn't have a dollar sign in front of it. I hope this never happens again.

Okay, so if you're following this stuff at all, in the chart below, Day 6 for the novel is today. Day 4 for the shorter work will be whenever I work on it again.

Today's Writing
All my writing today was on the novel. After I separated the smaller story out of the larger one, the writing went a lot faster. I'm pleased. (grin)

Fiction Words: 2600 (on the nose... weirder and weirder)

Writing of "Simon Stark" (SF novel)
Day 1..... 3800 words. Total words to date..... 3800 words
Day 2..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 5316 words
Day 3..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 8258 words
Day 4..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 12519 words
Day 5..... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 15558 words
Day 6..... 2600 words. Total words to date..... 18158 words

Writing of "Norval Babineaux" (short story)
Day 1..... 3405 words. Total words to date..... 3405 words
Day 2..... 1487 words. Total words to date..... 4892 words
Day 3..... 0339 words. Total words to date..... 5231 words
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX words

Total fiction words for the month..... 46797
Total fiction words for the year..... 511838

The Journal, Friday, 9/25: Make Bookstores Know Your Print Books Exist

Rolled out early again, about half past 1. My little cat needed me to get up for some reason I still don't understand. She woke me about 12:30 and I laid there for an hour before she finally nagged me out of bed.

(grin)

Did much of nothing the first couple hours again. I'd like very much to change that. For now I guess it'll be what it'll be. At the end of the day if I'm making headway on the novel (or whatever writing) then I guess it's all good.

Nothing to do today but write as far as I know. I have noticed I'm getting more relaxed about writing awhile and then doing other things. I don't think of them as breaks, really, but I guess that's how they function.

Took an intentional break to read Dean's post. It's a good one. In the topic he talks about getting your indie published paper books into bookstores, how to make sure bookstores know your book exists so they'll buy it. Yeah, the topic of my post is to send you to Dean's post to read his topic. It's important. Go. Read.

Hmm. Just realized tomorrow is Saturday. I like college football, specifically involving LSU (and other teams in the SEC), Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State. Tomorrow, LSU plays at 9 a.m., OSU vs. Texas OR Tennessee vs. Florida at 12:30 p.m. and Arizona vs. UCLA at 5 p.m. Bet I get a lot of writing done before 9 a.m. tomorrow. (grin)

Today's Writing
I had a pretty good writing day today. At about 1:30 I went over my daily goal. Since tomorrow might be a short day, depending on what I get done before 9 a.m., I thought I'd press onward.

Lesson 1: Why did I press onward? Goals and challenges aside, being a professional fiction writer is a game of averages. For example, I've had three days out of seven when I did very little on the book, but my average (arithmetic mean) over the whole 7 days is well over my daily goal.

Lesson 2: Never be afraid to cut what your Creative Voice (not your conscious, critical mind) is telling you needs to be cut. This book began really taking off after I hacked off the dead weight that was the first 5,000 words or so because it was a different story. But notice that I didn't "figure that out" with my conscious mind. I listened to that quiet little voice deep inside that told me something wasn't right.

I still have to write a short story, create a cover, and publish it before Monday at 6 p.m. (grin)

Fiction Words: 4634

Writing of "Simon Stark" (SF novel)
Day 1..... 3800 words. Total words to date..... 3800 words
Day 2..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 5316 words
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Day 4..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 12519 words
Day 5..... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 15558 words
Day 6..... 2600 words. Total words to date..... 18158 words
Day 7..... 4634 words. Total words to date..... 22792 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 51431
Total fiction words for the year..... 516472

The Journal, Saturday, 9/26: No topic, sort of

I slept in this morning until almost 3. Sure felt good. (grin)

Then I got up.

Not a great day around the Stanbrough camp. I won't bore you with the annoying, frustrating, aggravating details. Just not a good day.

I almost made the topic of this post "writing for therapy," but that would've been a hoax. Or politically correct. I get confused.

I do know nowadays when you tell an outright, bold-face lie it's most often referred to as either a "hoax" or "politically correct." Well, unless you happen to be a politician. Then it's called a "strategy shift."

Anyway, I couldn't title it "writing for therapy" because I don't personally believe in writing as a useful tool for therapy. Not real writing. And not real therapy.

Yeah, I can see writing an ex-hubby or ex-wife's name on a weird little straw doll and then setting fire to it before hurling it over a thousand foot cliff. I mean, I don't really think it would have the effect you're hoping for in the real world, but it couldn't hurt, right?

But that isn't writing. That's verbal vindictiveness. It's murder without a possibility of a conviction. 'Cause you just murdered the straw doll, see, and not the real person. Well, you know, IF you can call a nasty ex-husband or ex-wife a "real person." Up to you, I guess.

(For the official record, I did NOT hear from my ex today. I mean my ex had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with what I viewed as a generally crappy day. So there's one bright side.)

Okay, but back to writing for therapy. Then there's that whole weird thing too where you're advised to write the victim of your passion a note or a letter, but then instead of mailing it, you flush it down the toilet. Or burn it. Or stomp on it and then flush it or burn it.

Okay, seriously, that's just silly. If I'm gonna go to all that effort, I'm gonna mail it. See what I mean?

Besides, if I did that and then tried to flush it, guess whose toilet would get plugged up? And you know who AIN'T gonna stop by to help me clean up the mess? The ex or the ex.

And seriously, if you decide to try that one, write an actual letter on actual paper. This doesn't work in any way, shape or form with emails. Plus it could get expensive.

But maybe there is one way for a writer to write for therapy.

Say you sneak away from your life for awhile. Say you put your fingers on your keyboard. Say you begin moving your fingers so that all of a sudden you're out of your crappy day. You're running and laughing and screaming and yelling and otherwise generally having a freakin' ball with your characters.

Now THAT'S writing for therapy. But that isn't really writing, is it? Nope. It's playing with your friends. And playing with your friends is ALWAYS good therapy.

Today's Writing
As opposed to pretty much everything else, the writing went well. Two good sessions before about 7:30 a.m. I wrote the rest considerably later. I'll take it.

Fiction Words: 3149

Writing of "The Coming of Simon Stark" (SF novel)
Day 1..... 3800 words. Total words to date..... 3800 words
Day 2..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 5316 words
Day 3..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 8258 words
Day 4..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 12519 words
Day 5..... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 15558 words
Day 6..... 2600 words. Total words to date..... 18158 words
Day 7..... 4634 words. Total words to date..... 22792 words
Day 8..... 3149 words. Total words to date..... 25941 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 54580
Total fiction words for the year..... 519621

The Journal, Sunday, 9/27: Keep Coming Back

Rolled out right at 2, anxious to get back to the novel.

Every now and then I check up on my lists and purge them. On this weak little list, I had only 31 subscribers. Of those, six had never opened the email when they received it. This blog has been running from my main site since July 1, pretty much every day. I think that's a long enough time to indicate interest. So I unsubscribed those six folks. Ten to one I won't hear from them (because they won't realize

it), and that's fine. (grin)

When your writing stalls, it's hard to come back. That's your conscious mind trying to keep you from writing. Believing you have to succumb to that is pure, unadulterated bullcookies. You don't. You just don't.

Once again today it felt early like I might not get any writing done. At all.

But I kept going back. I kept putting my fingers on the keyboard. I read about the previous two paragraphs, and then I wrote whatever came.

That's the key to the whole thing. No matter the situation, if you're writing fiction, Keep Coming Back and Write the Next Sentence. And don't question it. If you doubt the sentence you write, that's your conscious mind butting in. Just write the next sentence, whatever it is. Then write the next sentence, write the next sentence, write the next sentence.

Wonderful fun. I wish the same for my friend Alison and for all of you.

Today's Writing
I wrote. (grin)

Fiction Words: 3641

Writing of "The Coming of Simon Stark" (SF novel)
Day 1..... 3800 words. Total words to date..... 3800 words
Day 2..... 1516 words. Total words to date..... 5316 words
Day 3..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 8258 words
Day 4..... 4261 words. Total words to date..... 12519 words
Day 5..... 3039 words. Total words to date..... 15558 words
Day 6..... 2600 words. Total words to date..... 18158 words
Day 7..... 4634 words. Total words to date..... 22792 words
Day 8..... 3149 words. Total words to date..... 25941 words
Day 9..... 3641 words. Total words to date..... 29582 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 58221
Total fiction words for the year..... 523262

The Journal, Monday, 9/28: How I Write

Rolled out a little after 3, having stepped outside to watch some of the lunar eclipse last night.

More than likely I won't get a lot of writing done today, at least on the novel. I do have to write the short story of the week. It posts tonight at 6 p.m. But I also have to take my pickup to Sierra Vista again to finish the repair I started last week. Life happens.

I don't really want to pry my head out of my novel right now, so I think I'll publish an excerpt from the novel as the short story. It'll work well. You'll see. (grin) Well, if you read it.

I also want to increase the visibility of my books to brick and mortar stores, so I'll be opening a publisher

website over the next several days to do that. This is something I picked up on while reading over some of the comments on a recent DWS post. Invaluable stuff.

Okay, a bit on how I write. This was prompted by a subscriber who mentioned that he enjoys the posts but that it simply isn't the way he writes.

I want to say up front, that is absolutely fine. As DWS says, every writer is different. Every writer's process is different. But I can't write about other writers' processes in this blog. So do your own thing, no biggie.

What I've learned about writing since early 2014 is nothing short of incredible. I can't talk with other writers about writing and NOT mention this stuff. It has proven invaluable (and I'm not exaggerating) to me. Dean suggests keeping it secret because so few will "get it," but I just can't do that. So here goes.

For my part (as I've said before), I write this Journal for three reasons: as a personal diary for myself, to share what I know, and to let others know what is possible. By "what is possible" I mean following Heinlein's Rules and writing off into the dark can make writing a great deal of fun while vastly increasing your productivity and the quality of your stories.

Do I wish that for you? Yes. Absolutely. Do I fret over whether you're even willing to try it? No. Not because I don't care, but because I have my own stuff to worry about, just as you do.

If you'll forgive a religious allusion here, I'm kind of Saul turned Paul in this deal. Remember, I used to buy into all the myths. Hell, I used to teach them. Vehemently.

I used to believe (now get this) that I could produce an original work in my own unique voice by editing and rewriting and polishing until what I had written looked like everything else in the publisher's slush pile. I still wonder, how in the world did I NOT see the paradox in that?

I read somewhere that insanity is defined as doing something exactly the same way over and over and over again while hoping for a different result. You know, for what it's worth.

So I don't do that. I allow my own unique voice to shine through, which means I resign my control-freak role as General Manager of the Universe and trust my subconscious to tell the story. And then I call myself a writer so I actually am trying to develop a work ethic as a writer.

If I were a mechanic, I would spend time every day working on cars. If I were a doctor, I would spend time every day practicing medicine. If I were a plumber, I would spend time every day fixing plumbing problems. I'm a writer. Why shouldn't I spend some hours every day practicing my craft? You know, writing?

The truth is this: Writing "fast" doesn't mean lower quality. It just means spending more time in the chair putting new publishable words on the page. It means writing at a blazing speed of about 17 words per minute, and it means getting it right the first time.

For some, it's too scary to even try, though they won't say that. Instead they'll say something like "Well, I have a life," meaning they don't have time to do their job. How long would you get away with that if you were a cop or a plumber or a carpenter? "Sorry, Boss, I can't put in the time today. I have a life." And there are any number of other excuses. And that's fine.

As an aside, I mentioned Heinlein's Rules to a woman in Prescott a while ago. You know how long it takes to read them. She wouldn't even look. "No need," she said. "I don't write science fiction."

I just said "Okay." I mean, what can I say in the face of that kind of intentional ignorance?

This is the way I write. This is my process, but I didn't come up with it. It's how Bradbury wrote. It's how pretty much all of the pulp writers wrote. It's how DWS and Kristine Kathryn Rusch and JA Konrath and a bunch of others write. I want to be a long-term professional fiction writer who writes across all genres, so I follow the lead of long-term professional fiction writers who write across all genres. Shrug.

As I wrote earlier, I DO wish for others the same freedom, joy, productivity and increased quality that I've found in my own writing. But how you write is up to you. I don't dwell on it. As Ben Johnson said in a movie awhile back, "Not my department." (grin)

Today's Writing
Wrote a little over 1200 words before heading for SV. That was on the short story of the week, "There's No Fool." But the short story is excerpted exactly from the novel, so I'm not counting the short story words separately. (grin)

Then when I got back I created a cover and published the story to my website and D2D. Then I wrote a bit more in one quick session, then posted this and called it a day. I'll add the story to my Short Fiction page after I post this.

Fiction Words: 1900 (weird)

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Day 6..... 2600 words. Total words to date..... 18158 words
Day 7..... 4634 words. Total words to date..... 22792 words
Day 8..... 3149 words. Total words to date..... 25941 words
Day 9..... 3641 words. Total words to date..... 29582 words
Day 10... 1900 words. Total words to date..... 31482 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 60121
Total fiction words for the year..... 525162

The Journal, Tuesday, 9/29: Collections, Box Sets and Other Non-Writing Stuff

Well, I didn't get up this morning. Wide awake, I looked at the clock and thought it said 1:45 a.m. That's close enough to 2 to start a normal day (for me) so I got up. But in actuality, it was 11:45 p.m. last night. Two hours earlier.

Still, I was awake, so I figured I might as well make the best of it. I worked on my new publisher website for a couple hours. That was my waking up time, only it lulled me. (grin) So around 1:30 I went back to bed for about an hour and a half.

Got up again at 3, did a little more on the website, read/researched a couple other publisher websites, and signed up to sell my ebooks via OmniLit (http://www.omnilit.com), a new (to me) online ebook vendor. Again, if you have your books available only in Amazon, you are SO missing out.

Finally, a couple hours after getting up the second time, I closed the websites to get them off the screen, and turned to my writing 'puter and the Stark novel.

Nope. Didn't happen. I felt like it's been forever since I had a good walk, so I grabbed my camera and headed out. Had a short walk (just over 2 miles) but got some great pics. Came back and put a few

on Facebook.

Then I made and ate breakfast, then got a shower, then came back here and did some preliminary work re collections. I didn't realize how many uncollected short stories I have floating around.

Then to write this and what you see below (everything except Today's Writing and the numbers) and now, finally, just after noon, I'm turning to my writing 'puter. Barely time to get my 3000 words for the day before I take off an hour for NYPD Blue. Pretty sure this is the last week of the show.

Oh, this notice is actually a day late, but I hope you'll drop by and read the topic (Writing A Bunch of Words) on Dean's post from yesterday. I recommend this for those of you who want to increase your productivity but can't quite get that from me. In this post, Dean shows you how he wrote 6300 words in 7.5 hours. Chances are, it isn't what you think. He also gets a tad snarky, his word, not mine. (grin)

Okay, although I very much enjoy working on my own websites, I also dread it. When I get my teeth into a project, I want to keep going until it's finished.

Working on a website is a very different kind of creativity than writing. For one thing, I have a final result in mind when I start. I also am even more anxious to see the finished website than the finished novel. And I work quickly so I can finish a website in MUCH less time than it takes to write a novel. For those reasons and more, it would be SO easy to take off a couple days and just get the Publisher website up and running.

But today is also the next to the last day of the month. I'd love to go out with 70,000 words this month, but I don't think that's gonna happen. Still, I'd like to make a run at it. And if I take today off, there is no possible way I'm gonna finish the month in style.

So one more part of my retraining rears its ugly head. I need to write when I can (writing must remain my number one priority) and do everything else when I'm not writing. That includes working on that website. And that means part of my retraining is to make myself able to turn my back on it when it's time to write some more.

Another number two priority is putting together some collections. I just realized this morning I have twenty uncollected short stories. There also is still one 5-story Stringer collection that has not been combined into a 10-story collection yet, plus a single Stringer story that has not been collected. Nick Porter has two uncollected individual stories, and then I have twenty.

So I have to think of a way of putting all those together in various batches. The individual stories I probably will bunch with my own with a nod to the original pseudonym. But I still have to put the collections together, format them, create covers and publish them.

And I enjoy doing all of that, but it isn't writing, and I enjoy writing more than all of that put together. Hence the priorities. (grin) But it'll get done. Before too long. I just have to write when I can write and work the rest of the time.

Oh, and then BookBub popped up with a link to 8 Tips on Creating Single Author Box Sets. So now I'm thinking in that direction too. Oh well. A guy's gotta have a hobby.

Today's Writing
Poor writing day today, though I did get a lot of other things done and started, as I alluded to above. I expect a much stronger writing day tomorrow. Stay tuned.

Fiction Words: 1476

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Day 6..... 2600 words. Total words to date..... 18158 words
Day 7..... 4634 words. Total words to date..... 22792 words
Day 8..... 3149 words. Total words to date..... 25941 words
Day 9..... 3641 words. Total words to date..... 29582 words
Day 10... 1900 words. Total words to date..... 31482 words
Day 11... 1476 words. Total words to date..... 32958 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 61597
Total fiction words for the year..... 526638

The Journal, Wednesday, 9/30: On Being Organized and a Major Change

Rolled out a little before 3. I had forgotten how much "little work" would be necessary to create a new publisher website. This morning I created folders for covers. I filled one with covers that are 150 x 225 pixels, another for 180 x 270 pixels, and another for 300 x 450 pixels.

That and sorting them took three hours, but it's necessary when you have to upload covers for 9 novels, 20 short story collections, 15 nonfiction books, 5 poetry collections, and 110 short stories. Of course, it's a good problem to have and I'm not complaining. (grin)

Anyway, now when it comes time, I can upload all the covers of each size to the new website at once. And that will save me a huge chunk of time.

If I hadn't done this, I'd have to open the individual folder for the novel, collection or story, upload the cover in each of three sizes, then go to the next individual folder. To repeat that 159 times would take considerably more than three hours. (grin)

After I get the new publisher website up and running, I'll put together a few more collections. With twenty plus uncollected stories, that should be six collections (four each with 5 stories and two with 10 stories). Then I'll start thinking about box sets. It's all about opening several revenue streams for each story.

The writing today will be a big push to advance this novel and to close out the month. With my dismal showing the last couple days, I won't make 70,000 words of fiction for the month but I should easily clear 65,000. I'll take it. (grin)

Good post over at Dean's blog today on a new scam traditional publishers are pulling on their authors.

No walk today. I'll continue working on the website until around 8 or 8:30, and then start writing for the day.

After I wrote much of this blog post, I had some time left before my writing time begins. For awhile now I've been wanting to design a spreadsheet that will enable me to see daily and monthly details as well as annual trends in my writing. So I started messing around with that.

I tried three different structures before I hit on one that does what I want in a compact space. (BTW Dawn, I did this without looking at yours. I want to compare them after the fact to see how similar they are. (grin)

Anyway, it worked. And you know what that means, right?

Because it worked, this blog is going away. Only four of you were not subscribed to my Pro Writers blog, so I transferred you over. You won't have to do anything. And then probably I'll start posting to that blog once a week or so instead of every ten days.

So there y'go. After posting here almost every day since October 19, 2014, and after 210,525 words of what we're all agreeing is nonfiction (grin), I'm shuttin' 'er down. Thanks for hangin' in with me all this time. See you on the flip side.

Today's Writing
Good enough day of writing today. It is what it is, and tomorrow is a new month.

Fiction Words: 3538

Writing of "The Coming of Simon Stark" (SF novel)
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Day 3..... 2942 words. Total words to date..... 8258 words
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Day 8..... 3149 words. Total words to date..... 25941 words
Day 9..... 3641 words. Total words to date..... 29582 words
Day 10... 1900 words. Total words to date..... 31482 words
Day 11... 1476 words. Total words to date..... 32958 words
Day 12... 3538 words. Total words to date..... 36496 words

Total fiction words for the month..... 65135
Total fiction words for the year..... 530176

SWITCHING OVER NOW TO NOTEPAD DOC DAILY JOURNAL

October 1, 2015
Rolled out right at 3. It's a relief, albeit an odd relief, not to be sharing this daily journal anymore.
It's a huge relief knowing I don't have to add to this every day, that I can even just let it go.
From this point forward, I'll insert here what is significant to my writing process (meaning what I think I might want to look back over and learn from someday) and omit the rest.
Got approval from OmniLit to publish through them, so I'll start that process in the next day or two.

Oct 2. Up at 2:30. Started writing at 4. Hope to finish a short story today and advance the Stark novel.
Later today during breaks I'll push some stuff to OmniLit.
Nothing to OmniLit yet. I'm going to wait until I finish the publisher website.
No real advance of the Stark novel so not counting it at all. Tomorrow early, when I get up, I'm going to start at the beginning and read through. I think I took a wrong turn somewhere and am dragging it out with too much detail. The reader needs the result, not all the detail. This is a bad guy with a good woman, but he's still a bad guy, an alien wanting to rule over Earth.

Oct 3. Football today. Re writing, I've saved the file as Simon Stark 2 and begun rewriting the entire thing, albeit in creative voice. Basically I cycled back to the beginning, then began reading and allowing myself to touch it where my subconscious wanted to touch it. This will take probably a few days, but the story will be much tighter.

Oct 4. Still cycling through the novel. During this process, I'm counting net new words written. Not

counting those I delete or overwrite.

Oct 5. Finished cycling through and added a bit more to the story. My word count is starting to rise again now that I'm writing instead of improving. :-)

Oct 6. Up late (8:30) last night with JustHost so up late this morning (3:30) to start work. Answered a long email by Debbie Jaquez (DA RILEY). Saved it in Writer Things folder for future use.

Oct 11. Wow. Oct 11 already. A third of the month gone. Up late 'til after 8 last night, but up at 2:30 this morning at Bit's insistence. It's okay. She's my girl and it's so fleeting. Determined to jump into the novel this morning (Stark). Yesterday I only finished a short (Sordid) and posted/published it, but when I got in here, I remembered I hadn't read Dean's blog for a few days. So I did that, then skipped over to read Kris' blog post on Author Earnings as well. Good stuff. Stuff probably 99% of aspiring writers need to know. Also did a little more work on the Publisher website this morning. I have to get that up and running, so I think I'll work on that this morning and see what shakes out for my writing. Stopped working on the site for now (about 6:30). I remember I can migrate my personal site to the publisher site, so i'm gonna try that. It should be done by 7:30, and I'll check it later this morning. Right now I have to write on the novel for awhile. Didn't write a word on the novel. Spent ALL DAY screwing with the new site, my host, etc. Finally erased all files and started over. Not a good day.

Oct 12. Rolled out at 3. Screwed around writing what will become three or four (or more) blog posts on all the BS that's so prevalent out there concerning traditional publishing. Going walking when the sun gets up, so at 5 I turned to the new publisher website to clean it up a bit more. I'll dedicate the rest of the day to writing after I get back from my walk.

Oct 13. Finished the Stark novel today at 26 calendar days, 23 writing days, averaging 2600 wpd on writing days. Gotta get up to 3,000 wpd and stay there. 60,262 words written, 56,851 in final version. Back to short stories tomorrow. I want to write next Monday's short story before I start anything else.

Oct 14. Piddled around from 1:30 when 'Bit got me up until 5:30 (now) working on this. To a short story now. Okay, great day of writing. Finished "Ink," 5269 words for the next story of the week.

Oct 15. Did nothing. Felt blah so just did nothing.

Oct 16. Published the Stark novel to Smashwords, D2D and Amazon. Going to push through and finish the publisher website today.

Oct 19. "Finish the publisher website" I wrote back on Oct 16. Ha! That's still gonna be awhile. I hope to have it up and running on its own steam by December 1. Want to get back to writing too. I think once I realized I had over 750,000 for the year that began on Oct 19, 2014, I gave up and cruised through yesterday. I didn't write another word really after I finished the Stark novel. I'm not too happy with it, either. It feels disjointed, etc. I'll wait to see what others say about it. It's only my second novel that isn't in the Wes Crowley series, so I'm placing too much importance on it. Once again, I need to Just Start the Next Story. Anyway, today I wanted to write, was going to write, had a great but short walk, then piddled all day. I just didn't feel like writing. I did the thing where I sat at the keyboard and tapped out some words, but didn't really get into it. So I finally decided I just won't worry about writing for the rest of today.

Oct 21. New plan, new goal. 3000 words per day, 1 new story per week, and 1 new file (collection or novel) uploaded to XinXii until they're all up. It should build quickly without sucking up all of my time.
Oct 20. I've written well over a million words since Oct 19 last year through Oct 18 this year. Including only The Journal and fiction, I wrote 961,154 words. The fiction part of that was 750,466, and I didn't write the last four days of that year. :-) Weird. I think once I hit 750,000 I kind of "shut down." Then yesterday I wrote 1969 words on a new mob story and thus far today I've written just under a thousand on a camping horror story. I probably will work on both of those today.

Oct 22. Wrote Barbecue today, a weird horror vengeance type of thing. Over 4800 words so that works.

Oct 25. Wrote "Family" today, just over 3800 words. A great surge. Began working on the new publisher website, StoneThread Publishing.

Oct 31. Well, I let everything go except the publisher website. Finished the month with 43,697 words. Good enough. Tomorrow's a new month.

Nov 1. Oof. Added a "For Readers" page to STP this morning and created a Reader Price List. No reason not to sell direct to readers. I want to find a way to start a subscription. A recurring monthly donation would glean the reader everything I've written and everything to come, as it comes. I have a futuristic story idea. I have to get it (or something) written for the short story of the week, which posts tomorrow.

SWITCHING BACK NOW TO THE WORD DAILY JOURNAL

NO JOURNAL FROM NOV 2 THROUGH NOV 24

Private: Guide to The Daily Journal

October 10, 2015

Hi Folks, Welcome to The Daily Journal. This is a blog I started in another venue on October 19, 2014. I stopped posting to it on September 30, 2015.

UPDATE: Because I enjoy actually reporting my writing numbers, I'm going to start posting to this category again in the next few days. Reporting my numbers helps me hold myself accountable. When I don't, I tend to get lax and allow other things to take up my time.

I don't plan to send these posts to a list like I did before. But I will post my numbers plus perhaps a few notes on what's working for me at the time and any new short- and long-term writing goals. I hope you'll stop back for a visit. Maybe this will help show you what is possible when you simply sit down at the keyboard and write.

Okay, back to the Guide:

In this venue, under this tab, there are 77 posts not counting this one. If you want to be a professional fiction writer, or if you just want to pick up some tips, I advise you to read through them. Most of them include a Topic of the Day (or Night). But you might want to skim over those that don't. Often there are jewels of information in the first part of the post.

Finally, toward the bottom of each post is a tally for whatever I was writing at the time. You might want to check those out just to show yourself what is possible. Or not. Up to you.

I hope you'll also check out my Audio Lectures and my fiction and nonfiction books. Enjoy your stay, and be sure to let me know if I can help.

Best,

Harvey

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Eformatting, Writer Resources, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, epublishing, Heinlein's Rules, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Wednesday, 11/25

November 25, 2015

Well, I'm back. Finally. And I won't leave again unless it's feet first. I promise.

Listen, if you'd rather not receive this, please don't just unsubscribe. Please email me at HarveyStanbrough@gmail.com and I'll remove your name from this list myself. It makes a difference over at MailChimp. Thanks.

When I wrote here last, I was writing fiction pretty much every day, in addition to writing this (daily) blog as well as my main Pro Writers blog, creating the publisher website, creating book covers, promo docs, and everything else.

Then I decided to cut this Journal to save some time. But in so doing, I cut my accountability. And apparently that's something I still need.

I thought recording my numbers on a spreadsheet would suffice. In fact, I recorded my numbers on that spreadsheet from the first day of September straight through until November 23.

But the numbers were dismal. Not surprisingly (in hindsight), I fell off Heinlein's Rules, specifically Rules 1 and 2. Not good for a guy who boasts he is an adherent to those rules.

In September, I wrote 65,135 words, a decent month, though nothing to brag about. In October, I wrote pretty regularly right up until I cleared the 750,000 word mark that began on October 19, 2014. Then, no longer having a "place to report" (this Journal), I stopped.

For October, up until I hit 750,466 words for that one-year period, I wrote 35,073 words. For the rest of October (from Oct 15 through Oct 31) I wrote on only two days for a total of 8624 words. (For comparison, had I met my daily goal of 3,000 per day, that would have been 51,000 words.)

And the self-imposed slump wasn't over. During the month of November, I wrote fiction only on the 2nd (3330 words) and the 23rd (5142 words) for a monthly total thus far of 8472 words. Ugh.

So since October 14th, when I reached the 750,466 word mark, I have written a grand total of 17,096 words. And yes, that's better than nothing. But the potential during those 41 days (at my goal of 3,000 per day) was 123,000 words.

Okay, so the point of all this is that I need the public accountability. So The Journal is back.

Probably I won't write as many "topic" things here as I did before. Probably I'll just record the daily round, any changes in goals, and my numbers.

Goals

- My daily goal is to write 4,000 new publishable words of fiction per day. (On the few days that I did write during my self-imposed slump, the totals were well over 4,000 words on four of the five days.)
- The weekly goal is to write one new short story per week. However, I'm no longer posting the newest story live every week. When I finish a new one, it goes into the queue to be posted.
- My goal for 2015 is to hit 148,000 words in the next 37 days (taking off December 25). If I hit that it will bring me to 721873 words for the year. That's considerably less than I wrote from October 19, 2014 through October 18, 2015, but I'll take it.
- My goal for 2016 is to hit one million words of original fiction. That's easily doable even if I miss my goal of writing 4,000 words per day every day. So we'll see.

Okay, onward and upward.

The Day

So today I rolled out at 3, messed around for a half-hour or so with email and Spider solitaire (the devil's own temptation, that game).

Then I added 10 photos from my Saved file at Bigstock into my cart for downloading when my download day resets at about 11 a.m. (I'm currently in a subscription plan in which I can download ten images per day for a month. Not easy to keep up with it, but doing so means my cover images cost only 33 cents each.) Only two days left on that.

Then, between trips to let cats in or out, I did a little website work on the two websites and then came here to write this. It's currently 7 a.m.

Going now to restart this "campaign" at MailChimp, so this will go out at 6 p.m. Arizona time.

Today's Writing

Well, I set out to write a short story based on Wes' travels in Mexico. About 1200 words in, I realized it didn't want to be a short story. It was the new opening for the ninth novel in the Wes Crowley saga. So first, as painful as it was, I found my old files regarding the ninth book and deleted them. Period.

Ugh. Then I went back to the opening and wrote a couple more sessions, ending up with the word count that you see below for today. I didn't get quite as many new words done today as I wanted to, but I did get reinvigorated. To be sure I'm firing on all cylinders from the start tomorrow morning, I cut off the writing and read back through a few of the other novels in the saga to get some names and a timeline right.

This is going to be a painful book to write (emotional, not difficult) but I know it's right. So part of me dreads it and part of me can't wait. Okay, that's more than I expected to write on this post, so I'll put up the numbers and talk with you again tomorrow.

By the way, thanks for being there.

Fiction Words: 3887

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 12359
Total fiction words for the year…… 586232

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Harvey Stanbrough, Announcements, Heinlein's Rules6 Comments

The Journal, Thursday (Thanksgiving), 11/26

November 26, 2015

Hi Folks,

Thanksgiving. Who knew? Still, a pretty standard day around here except for football and great cooking smells emanating through the house as I write.

For the second day in a row after I set a new daily goal of 4,000 words, I'm gonna miss it. This one, though, I'll kind'a forgive myself. Very difficult to concentrate on anything while part of my brain is thinking of the feast to come later.

The Day

Rolled out a little after 2. Same usual wake-up process of emails and cleaning up other small bits of stuff that don't fit anywhere else (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). I probably easily write a couple of thousand words per day of nonfiction (Facebook, emails, etc.) but I don't count that. I just bear it in mind to make me feel more accomplished than I actually am. (grin)

On my second cup of coffee I did a little more research back through the earlier Wes Crowley novels to be sure I had the right "bad guy" for this one. Named a few accomplices for him, made a few notes about their history, their acquaintances, and so forth. Then finally I wrote a session early today.

Took a break, then back for another early session of writing. Took another break and an early shower just to feel better. During all of this I've been herding cats, explaining patiently to them why they can't go out yet (it was raining), then letting them out, letting them in, all that stuff.

Way back when I first started this novel series, Wes and Mac handed it to me out of a short story I'd written. I heard them talking with me just as plainly as I hear someone in my office talking to me.

I pretty much flashed through eight novels, but on the ninth book in the series I bogged down. Bad. Hopelessly mired.

But yesterday morning early, Wes sauntered into my office and sat down. He crossed his right ankle over his left knee, being careful not to scuff the front of my maple desk. He tipped his hat back a bit, then said, "Harvey, there ain't no rush in ridin' away from a life."

That was a variation on a sentence from an earlier book. I don't even remember which one. But it was exactly what I needed.

"I understand," I said. "And thanks, Wes."

He grinned, got up, and nodded at me. He said, "Well," and then he walked out.

And I got hot on the keyboard.

Today's Writing

Now today is Thanksgiving, so I can't sit here and write quite as much as I'd like. Still, armed with what my friend Wes gave me, I wrote a really good opening yesterday.

Today, I managed three sessions. And I also know this thing will just continue to flow when I come back to it tomorrow morning early. So no worries on the fairly light day today.

Fiction Words: 3092

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 15451
Total fiction words for the year…… 589324

Categories The Daily Journal

The Journal, Friday, 11/27

November 27, 2015

Hi Folks,

Okay, so for various reasons I didn't get to the novel until almost 10 this morning. Ugh.

Still, I don't usually hit the sack until around 7 or 8, so I should be able to carve 4 or 5 hours of writing time out of that 9 or 10 remaining hours. (grin)

The Day

Rolled out right at 3.

Reading DWS' blog and the comments. Pretty good topics for the past several days, but also came across something Dean wrote in response to a comment:

[A] number of indie writers now are doing mass market-sized papers. And trade sized. The trade are priced high enough to work in extended distribution, the mass market size are just selling through the authors' own sites and on Amazon.

I like it. This might be a way to capture those in-between readers. There are readers out there who want paperbacks but can't or won't pay the higher price for the trade paperbacks. That's okay. One of the big reasons we do trade paperbacks in the first place is so the comparison will be there. When a reader sees a $15.99 trade paperback sitting alongside a $5.99 ebook, they're encouraged to try the ebook.

But if they're really hooked on paper, they probably won't. Then again, they might well buy the less expensive mass-market paperback. Again, the trade paperback is right there beside it for $15.99. And the ebook is there at $5.99. And right between them is the mass-market paperback, a little smaller than the trade paperback but still in paper, and it's only $8.99 or $9.99.

I have a feeling that the target audience that would buy mass-market paperbacks is about the same size as the audience that will opt for ebooks. Because of their price, I suspect trade paperbacks are the smallest sellers. So naturally, I'm gonna try this. And naturally, I'll let you know how it goes.

Probably I'll try it with three novels at first, and if I see a good trend with those, then I'll do it with all my novels.

Okay, and all of that led me to spend a few hours looking for book printing services and prices in China and India. If the thought has crossed your mind as well, I'll save you some time: neither was much less expensive than CreateSpace, especially when you add shipping and handling and the inconvenience of waiting weeks instead of days for your books.

Today's Writing

Well, I missed my daily goal again, but only by less than 700 words. Not a major thing. The book is moving right along. I'm just not giving it quite as much time as it deserves right now. I hope to remedy that soon.

But probably not tomorrow. There's football and I'm only human. (grin)

Fiction Words: 3365

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 18816
Total fiction words for the year…… 592689

PS: Well, if you read this far, you win! I just read Dean's blog for today and came back to add this. Yes, it's that important. Please scroll down to the topic of the night and read it. And read the first few comments. Well worth the time. (grin)

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Harvey Stanbrough, Dean Wesley Smith, Applying the Craft

The Journal, Saturday, 11/28

November 28, 2015

Hi Folks,

Not really much going on today, as you'll see below. I almost let my head back into this one for a little while. You know the drill. Feeling like I needed to "figure out" something or other. Ugh.

Anyway, it turned out it was two of my characters (from different parts/times in the story) vying for my attention. (More on this below.)

Once I remembered there was nothing for me to "figure out," that all I needed to do was put my fingers on the keyboard and write, all the conscious mind nonsense went away.

The Day

Rolled out a little after 3, and after the usual wake-up routine I went straight to the novel.

I'm a little under the weather, so I've written in several short sessions today, puncuated by herding cats and other necessities of life.

And now I'm gonna post this a little early, then go sit on the couch, watch football and probably nap. (grin) Talk with you all tomorrow.

Today's Writing

Missed the daily goal again, but I don't mind at all given how I've felt all day. I could very easily have just not written today. In fact, if I hadn't revived this journal, I probably wouldn't have written a word of fiction.

So the book is still moving along, although today was something I've never experienced before.

I was writing along in the early reaches when one of the major characters (a major bad guy who was a very minor bad guy in an earlier book in the series) jerked my arm and dragged me into the future. He wanted to show me that scene — well, *those* scenes — and waiting was not an option.

While I was doing that, another character dragged me back to what I was writing earlier. I went back and forth like that over about 8 short sessions. So yeah, my characters are a little spoiled that way. It was exciting but exhausting and not something I would recommend.

I don't mind being unstuck in the time of my novel when I'm cycling back, but while I'm actively writing, it's almost more annoying than fun. Almost.

Again today I didn't give the novel quite as much time as it deserves, but given the circumstances, I'll take it.

Fiction Words: 3077

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words
Day 4…… 3077 words. Total words to date…… 13421 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 21893
Total fiction words for the year…… 595766

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Applying the Craft, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Sunday, 11/29

November 29, 2015

Hi Folks,

Well, four good days in a row thus far. Before today. Missed my daily goal of 4,000 words per day on all four days, so not excellent, but good. With over 3,000 words per day on those days, that's failing to success. Maybe I'll tip 4,000 today.

I've found that several times in the (now) five days I've been writing this novel I've had to remind myself that it isn't important. It can be any length. It can go wherever it wants to go and

end however it wants to end. The day I finish this one, I'll sit down and start another one. In other words, it's not a major, difference making, earth shaking Event. It's Just A Story.

(Yeah, I can hear the gasps. But seriously, a story, regardless of length, should be no more important in and of itself to a writer than the rebuild of an individual carburetor is to a mechanic or than a set of cabinets is to a carpenter.)

A man I consider a dear friend recently wrote to say he hopes I didn't really delete the roughly 11,000 words I had written earlier on Wes Crowley #9. Perhaps I could simply save it with a different file name and use it later in another story.

But no. For this particular story, I deleted it. What I had already written had left me hopelessly stalled. That was my subconscious crossing its arms and saying, "Nope. We aren't writing that."

I started again five days ago, and yesterday I had 13,421 words.

More gasps. Still, that's 11,000 "wasted" words, right?

Wrong. Those 11,000 words took me to the place where I knew the story wasn't working. So I tossed them aside and started over. To go back to the carpenter simile, words for a writer are like nails for a carpenter. If one bends or otherwise doesn't work, you chunk it and get another one.

When I write first to entertain myself, oddly enough a lot of other people like the story too. And if they don't like it, what happens? Nothing. That's how important it is.

Its only importance lies in the joy and fun it brings me when my characters say or do something I never would have thought of. (grin) To paraphrase Bradbury, if my characters can surprise me, they will certainly surprise the reader. And the joy of reading (and writing) lies in being surprised.

The Day

Rolled out right at 3, with allergies firing on all cylinders. So one new pill added to the regimen this morning. Hey, that's my generation. If it hurts, throw a pill at it. (grin)

Anyway, a little longer wake-up period this morning. Writing this novel, I just feel good. Not rushed, not confused, not hectic. Just calm and easy and happy that I finally chose this job.

Today's Writing

Great day of writing. Still not excellent, but a lot better than good. Everything flowed, there was minimal cycling back, and I put it all down in five slightly shorter than normal sessions of about 45 minutes each.

And for the first time on this novel, I hit my daily goal.

Now I'm gonna post a little early and watch the Cardinals whip San Francisco. Then I'm gonna try to extend my day and watch the Broncos (sans Peyton Manning) whip the New England Cheatriots.

Fiction Words: 4486

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words
Day 4…… 3077 words. Total words to date…… 13421 words
Day 5…… 4486 words. Total words to date…… 17907 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 26379
Total fiction words for the year…… 600252

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the Dark5 Comments

The Journal, Monday, 11/30

November 30, 2015

Hi Folks,

Last day of the month. I'm hoping for a really good day to close this one out and give me some momentum going into the last month of the year. But it'll be what it'll be, and I'm not overly worried about it. The novel's moving along smoothly and that's all that matters.

I'm also going to work walking back into my schedule. I always get lax when the weather turns colder, and I use "Oh, I'm in maintenance mode" to justify walking shorter distances and walking much less often. But it's a cop out.

Okay, so out the door for a walk finally around 11. Back by 12 with just under two miles. Not pleasant. Up and back in a large (about 50 yards wide) arroyo that I used to walk a lot. Floods from the recent monsoons have rocks strewn everywhere, and that's all right.

But also apparently a group of Lummoxes moved through, accompanied by Chretins and the ever popular trous de cul. (If you don't have French, Click Here. If it isn't already there, type in trous de cul, then translate from French to English).

The evidence? Old TVs and computer monitors used for target practice and left, along with the brass, spent shotshells, and ammo cartons. Creeps. Wish I knew where they exist so I could dump all their crap back in their yard. Then again, probably nobody could tell because of all the other shattered TVs, computer monitors, etc. lying around. I'd bet money right now there are

dirty diapers out in the yard too. And some of 'em probably belonged to children.

The Day

Stayed up late last night to watch the Broncos beat the previously undefeated Patriots. Great game that came down to overtime, which the Patriots almost always win. Anyway, totally worth the lost sleep. So this morning I rolled out at 3:30. (grin)

The wake-up period took a little longer again as I expected it would. Too cold to let the ladies (cats) out this morning early, although they think I very obviously am simply being mean. They also can't understand why I allowed it to get so cold on the other side of the door.

Still, it's Arizona cold (around 27), not COLD cold, like Indiana or Dallas in an ice storm or 4 or something. But I don't care. I'm keeping them inside. They're cats. They'll bug me only so long, and then they'll curl up for a nap and I can write.

Still looking forward to writing more on this novel every day. I think there's no better feeling in the world.

Oh, by the way, I found something you might find useful. Called "the BBC of the book world," Publishing Perspectives is a trade journal for international publishing news and opinion. (If you've published an ebook, unless you published it only to PDF and sent it only to your friends, you are published internationally.) They have a free email edition to "bring the latest need-to-know information directly to your inbox, Monday through Friday." To check it out, Click Here.

For any of you who don't read comments on these things, Gary Vineyard mentioned in a comment yesterday that he enjoys reading about the real life stuff that surrounds the writing. He mentioned Working Days: The Journals of the Grapes of Wrath. I ordered a copy from Amazon. (Paperback. A Steinbeck book in electronic format just ain't right.) And I'm gonna try to work in more of what I actually do around here. You know, on days when I actually do stuff. Thanks Gary.

Today's Writing

Started later than I had hoped. Had other things to deal with. Then I was hungry so I made a couple eggs and some hash browns and toast. Then to writing, finally. I hope to get a couple of good sessions before the walk, partly to let the breakfast settle, and I did.

Okay, I got a few more sessions than I'd hoped for, but they also were shorter than I'd hoped for. So all in all it kind of evened out, but I didn't have as good a day as I'd hoped for overall. Still, I'll take it.

Ended up with 30,118 for the month, which isn't bad given that I actually wrote only 8 days this month. Of course, that was my own stupid fault. Man I hope I never do that again. Ugh.

So anyway, I've said here before that averages are what matters when it comes to productivity.

My average (mean) daily production for this month is just over 1000 words per day. But divided only by the number of days I wrote, the mean is over 3600 words per day. Either way, I'll take it.

By the way, I'm not tied to the numbers themselves either. The numbers are merely a concrete tool I can use to set and achieve goals without fudging. I mean, "story" and "novel" are not set values. Four thousand words per day is a set value, and I either hit it or I miss it. Either way, it resets to zero the next morning.

So I need set values in order to drive myself. And I've pretty well proven that if I don't drive myself, I pretty much kick myself out of the Writers' Club. The numbers also enable me to watch for trends in my writing, which appeals to both my sense of stubborness (I only wrote HOW MUCH last December? Well hold my beer and watch this!) and my sense of Getting Stuff Done.

Fiction Words: 3739

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words
Day 4…… 3077 words. Total words to date…… 13421 words
Day 5…… 4486 words. Total words to date…… 17907 words
Day 6…… 3739 words. Total words to date…… 17907 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 30118
Total fiction words for the year…… 603991

The Journal, Monday, 12/1

December 1, 2015

Hi Folks,

Well, first day of the month. I was hoping for a really good day to start the month. It was good enough I guess, but various minor problems and one "incident" sucked up a lot of my time today. Well, and a little other writing.

The novel is still going great, very smoothly moving from scene to scene. That makes it even more annoying when I can't give it the time I want to give it. Tomorrow will be better in that regard, good lord, cats and children willing. I intend to spend at least 5 hours in the novel tomorrow.

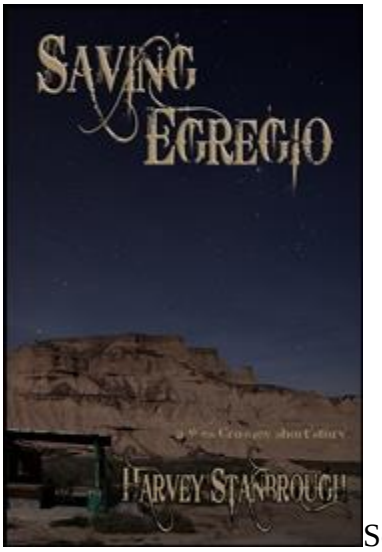
The Day

Pretty good night's rest last night and I rolled out right at 3 this morning.

For some reason I thought it was 2 until I staggered into the kitchen, barked my shin on an errant cabinet door, cursed (quietly, people are trying to sleep) and caught the clock with my little flashlight. Three, right on the money. Score!

I can't complain too much about lost hours today, really. A huge chunk of that was Just Me.

Yesterday, while fact checking names and dates and who was dead or still alive at a certain time in an earlier Crowley book, I ran across a scene that struck me as a really good stand-alone story. Those of you who are signed up for the free story of the week will see it on Monday, February 1. If you Just Can't Wait it's available through all the standard bookslingers rat nayow (as they say in Texas).



So after an abbreviated wake-up period (halfway through my first mugga), I devoted about an hour this morning to adding almost 600 words to that story to flesh it out and give it legs. Then another couple hours for the cover (that's it on the left) and publishing it to D2D, Smashwords, and Amazon.

Oh, the title is Saving Egregio. So there's three hours right there, gone from the novel.

Then I hit another walk, but only about two miles. I'm gonna have to stay out of washes for awhile. I need to walk roads until I get my wind built up again. There are places an arroyo will run downhill for a mile and the slope is so gentle you don't even realize it. Until you turn around to head back. You notice it then.

And then I devoted about three hours to back and forth emails with one of my children about a problem she's having. Didn't settle anything, but that wasn't the purpose. You dads out there know what I mean. She didn't want the problem shot or sloughed off a pirogue into a wetland fulla dem swamp donkey or dumped in a gasseous mine way out in the desert. So no "solving" was called for. It was just one of those deals where a good dad will do that "be there" thing.

Now I'm still strivin' for that good-dad title, so you see my predicament. And the thing is, when I'm hangin' with Wes an' the boys, I can't "be" anywhere recognizable to modern America. So I

set things aside for awhile. Fortunately, I was hangin' with Paco Messina and Frank Freeman and a few other Comanchero types. They thought it was hilarious that I had to bow out of the book for awhile. I think *they* think I keep an eye on 'em for Crowley.

This was another morning when I couldn't let the babies out early. It was 24 degrees and they were plenty miffed about it, let me tell you. Neither one of them curled up for a nap for a good ten, fifteen minutes. I seriously considered ordering in some liquid nitrogen. I would dunk about the last half-inch of a tail in there, see, and then I'd flick it with my finger, snapping it off. Then I'd say "Now, see what can happen? See? That's why I'm not letting you outside."

Oh, note to self. Write something featuring liquid nitrogen and dunked parts. Do NOT make it chick lit, 'cause ewwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww.

Finally, my almost regular note on Dean Wesley Smith. You guys need to check it out beginning tomorrow. Seriously. He's going to write a book on Heinlein's Rules, and he's going to post it chapter by chapter on his blog starting in the next day or two. There are only five rules, but he will go into a TON of other stuff if I know Dean. And some of it will set off that little bell in your head. This one is not to be missed.

Today's Writing

Well, I seem to have explained everything pretty well above, so I'll just move into the numbers.

Oh, I noticed I hadn't updated the totals on the right for the past few days so I went back and did that.

Fiction Words: 2064

Writing of **The Scent of Acacia** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words
Day 4…… 3077 words. Total words to date…… 13421 words
Day 5…… 4486 words. Total words to date…… 17907 words
Day 6…… 3739 words. Total words to date…… 21646 words
Day 7…… 1471 words. Total words to date…… 23117 words

Writing of **"Saving Egregio"** (Wes Crowley short story)

Day 1…… 0593 words. Total words to date…… 3397 words (Done—I'm counting only the 593 new words in the totals)

Total fiction words for the month…… 2064
Total fiction words for the year…… 606055

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Dean Wesley Smith, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the Dark2 Comments

The Journal, Tuesday, 12/2

December 2, 2015

Hi Folks,

Hey, if you want to see some excellent but very emotional writing, visit Sarandipity Travels. Sara is a beloved friend who is walking a difficult path. She is one of the best photographers I've ever had the pleasure of knowing, and she is an absolutely excellent writer.

The Day

Again I rolled out right at 3 this morning. Again it was too cold (27, now down to 24) to let the babies out. They seem to be settling down more quickly though.

Overnight sometime I had a brainstorm regarding the publishing website.

I started putting it together halfway through my first mug of coffee, and about four hours later it's finished. There's a new look to the home page, including a new slider. I also created an About Us page for those browsers who are interested in such stuff. It's basically just a summary of the site, though, plus an invitation to subscribe and a teaser regarding what's coming.

So I lost a few hours at the top of the day, but well worth the time. I still have nine and a half practical hours from which I should be able to carve out five or so for writing. So we'll see.

UPDATE: No! Bad Harvey! It was NOT worth my quiet time from 3 t0 6.

During that time I'm alone. The world is quiet.

During that time the neighbor's dog isn't Barking At Nothing. My girls aren't running in and out and in and out and in and out. Delivery guys in large, very noisy vans aren't pulling through the circular drive between my house and the neighbors' house repeatedly (seriously, six trucks, six times, not one single stinkin' delivery) because they're too stupid to check a road map. Dorky guys aren't dragging (yes, dragging, not carrying) aluminum ladders along the gravel driveway so they can get on my roof to retrieve their stupid bird-stuff-covered satellite dish; etc. ad nauseam. If I'd know that guy was gonna make that much noise I'd have just shot it down for him. I'm helpful that way. I mean DAYum.

Know what you can get accomplished in nine and a half hours of that kind'a crap? Pretty much nada.

No walk today. That's for sure.

Today's Writing

Well, as I alluded to above, today it was one thing after another after another.

As it turned out, the "few hours" I devoted to the publishing website at the beginning of the day when the rest of the world was asleep was NOT worth it. I should have spent that time writing. I can do non-writing stuff — even creative non-writing stuff — During The Hectic Hours. And I could have put down more words in the quiet hours this morning than I ended up with for the whole day. How's that for preloading tomorrow with a New Plan?

Anyway, every writing session was interrupted at least twice. Of course I was able to come back and get back into it, but each time I had to cycle back, touch this, touch that, etc. Overall, it was a very annoying day. And then of course the frustration builds too.

I got two good scenes finished. That's pretty much it. I am officially disgruntled. Seriously, I'd scare a postal worker right now. Even a postal postal worker.

Fiction Words: 2843

Writing of **The Scent of Acacia** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words
Day 4…… 3077 words. Total words to date…… 13421 words
Day 5…… 4486 words. Total words to date…… 17907 words
Day 6…… 3739 words. Total words to date…… 21646 words
Day 7…… 1471 words. Total words to date…… 23117 words
Day 8…… 2843 words. Total words to date…… 25960 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 4907
Total fiction words for the year…… 608898

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the DarkLeave a comment

The Journal, Wednesday, 12/3

December 3, 2015

Hi Folks,

Well, again, overnight I had a thought regarding the publishing website. So another early morning of poking about . But only during my waking up period, so some good done and no harm. Still a little more to do on this latest innovation but time to write now.

The Day

Got up late right at 4 this morning. Again it was too cold to let the babies out. But I did. I left the door so they could grab it and drag it open. They were back inside in about five minutes trying to walk without putting their little feet on the floor. The Liquid Nitrogen Effect, I call that. And they're settling in as I write this.

Did the publisher website thing I talked about above, then came here to begin this post.

Probably I'll walk later today. I'll need a break anyway. How far I walk will depend on how much I can get done on the story before the weather warms up enough to walk. If I get a few thousand words done before then, I'll take a longer walk.

Received my copy of Working Days. I look forward to delving into it tomorrow during breaks. The only thing that excites me more than writing is learning how other writers whom I admire write what I'm writing, whether it's fiction or nonfiction.

In my fiction, I take a lot of clues from Bradbury, O. Henry and Hemingway. In my poetry, Nemerov and a few others. And it's probably obvious to anyone who follows this blog and DWS' blog that I emulate his quite a bit. Soon I hope to be able to apply here what I learn from Steinbeck's journals.

By the way, if you are a fan of Hemingway or Bradbury, I recommend a couple of books there too. **Travels with Myself and Another: A Memoir** by Martha Gelhorn, and **Conversations with Ray Bradbury** edited by Steven L. Aggelis. The ebook worked for me with the former. The latter is available only in paperback.

While double checking the accuracy of the titles above at amazon.com, I also ordered **Odd Type Writers: From Joyce and Dickens to Wharton and Welty, the Obsessive Habits and Quirky Techniques of Great Authors** by Celia Blue Johnson. (Hell of a title, eh? Glad I didn't have to do the cover for that one.)

Note that I ordered this primarily out of a tongue-in-cheek curiosity. I suspect many of the "quirky techniques" are bogus, things that FICTION WRITERS (professional liars) told overly snoopy fans and wannabe writers to give them something to play with. Like Hemingway always writing drunk in his underwear while standing up. (grin)

Okay, spent a little more time playing here than I meant to. So for now, to the writing.

Did some cycling back, kind'a glued to a couple of scenes for some reason. They're fine. I just need to leave them alone now.

Got out for a short walk (a little under two miles). It was 45 here and no wind. Of course, after I got out there on the road, the wind picked up to a steady 7-8 mph. (When I turned around and walked with it, its force was blunted by about half and I was walking at about 3 mph so….)

Anyway, pancakes and syrup and ham slices for lunch, and back to the novel. Which is suddenly dragging. Hmmm.

Today's Writing: A Lesson

You've all heard me preach Writing Off Into the Dark. I've been doing that on short stories since April of 2014, and I've been doing it on novels since October of 2014. Briefly, it consists of shoving the conscious mind back into whatever box and allowing your subconscious to tell the story.

Every book writes differently.

In this particular novel, which is writing differently even from every other book in this series, I'm writing off into the dark in spurts. I get a thousand words here, eight hundred words there. Those words race all-out to advance the novel.

Then my conscious mind horns in.

Used to, it would horn in with "Well, what's the character gonna do next? What's gonna happen next? If you don't know, you can't write it, Moron."

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth, and I was able fairly easily to shut down that voice. But the conscious, critical mind doesn't stop trying.

In this book it's back with a vengeance in a different voice. I speed through a thousand or fifteen hundred or two thousand words and the conscious mind pops up. "Wait. Doesn't that scene sound like it should be connected to that scene you wrote two days ago back in Abilene? Maybe you'd better just scroll back and take a quick look."

See? It ISN'T trying to stop me. It's trying to alert me to a connection I might have missed.

Only the subconscious mind doesn't miss connections. It adds them when it's good and ready, but it doesn't miss them. You Have to Trust the Process.

So in this book, the conscious, critical voice is all about connections. Thing is, I've been wrestling with it for three days now, and I only recognized it a few minutes ago. And now my writing day is almost over.

That's okay. At least I recognized it. When you recognize a new form of critical voice, you can shove it aside and get on with the writing. Understand? And until you do, it'll keep popping up, annoying the mucus out of you.

Every book is different. This book writes in scenes. Probably some of those scenes will be disconnected until the book ends. But the thing is, NOW is not the time to worry about that. Now is the time to advance the story. Period.

Probably (unless everything miraculously comes together) I'll go back after The End (first time ever in a novel) and either connect the scenes or toss them. I suspect some of them are like the "loops" Dean talks about occasionally. Fun to write and in the flow and all that, but they don't really advance the story. They begin, loop around, and close back on themselves. And they get cut and tossed on the floor where they writhe around for a few minutes and expire. Or they get cut and adapted and become short stories.

Okay, so a lousy day from an advancing-the-novel perspective, but finding a loose pin that might have derailed me is gold. No complaints.

Oh, and sorry about the length on this one. I guess it was necessary.

Fiction Words: 1782

Writing of **The Scent of Acacia** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
Day 3…… 3365 words. Total words to date…… 10344 words
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Day 6…… 3739 words. Total words to date…… 21646 words
Day 7…… 1471 words. Total words to date…… 23117 words
Day 8…… 2843 words. Total words to date…… 25960 words
Day 9…… 1782 words. Total words to date…… 27742 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 6689
Total fiction words for the year…… 610680

Categories The Daily JournalTags Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Dean Wesley Smith, Applying the Craft, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the DarkLeave a comment

The Journal, Friday, 12/4

December 4, 2015

Hi Folks,

Received a comment via email yesterday. Just in case I confused anyone else, I wanted to share it. Here's the essence of the question followed by my response. I've added a little to the response, but the writer will see it here. If you have a comment, whenever possible please post it in the Comments section below.

Q: Harvey, Are you saying that sometimes the subconscious (writing into the dark) misleads us?

A: Not at all. The subconscious mind never misleads us. On the other hand, the conscious,

critical mind constantly puts up barriers in an attempt to save us from ourselves. (If we don't finish writing we can't publish, and if we don't publish we can't be harmed by rejection.)

One of those barriers is the conscious, critical mind trying to convince us that the subconscious is misleading us. How's that for coming full circle? (grin)

The conscious, critical mind will continue to try to take over. We just have to keep watching for it.

Also, yesterday I whipped off a few names of writers whose work has heavily influenced my own. By that I mean I studied their work with the intention of learning how they accomplished dragging me down into their writing. Another major influence (slip him in between Hemingway and Bradbury) was/is James Lee Burke. Others were Kate Chopin, Shirley Jackson, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Isabel Allende and Kristine Kathryn Rusch. (Haven't studied hers a lot yet but her writing blows me away.) By the way, she posts a free short story every week at her website too. Well worth a visit.

And I misspelled a name in yesterday's post. Travels with Me and Another is by Martha Gellhorn.

Be careful with facts that matter. It's fiction, right? So it's okay to make stuff up. But in my WIP, much of which takes place in the Mexican state of Guerrero, I got all four directions completely wrong. We (well, I) think of the Pacific coastline as running generally north and south. And in some places it does.

But in Guerrero, most of it runs from west to east. So the relatively narrow "northern border" of Guerrero is actually the western border. I just spent close to an hour replacing north with west, east with north, south with east and west with south. Selectively, of course. Otherwise in the scenes in Amarillo and Abilene I'd have had the sun setting in the south, and that hardly ever happens. I fully expect some readers to call me on having the Pacific Ocean south of Guerrero, but I don't mind. Because that's where it is.

The Day

Rolled out at 3 this morning. Finally warm enough to let the babies out so I wasn't under cattack for the first two hours of the day. So straight to the writing.

No walk today.

Haven't delved into Working Days yet. I'll read a bit tonight, then more tomorrow.

Did a little more cycling back today, but nothing like yesterday.

Today's Writing

I have a feeling it's going to be a sprint to the end of the novel now. I mean it'll probably be a series of sprints over a few days, but I feel like the end is coming. In a way I'm sorry, but in a way I'm happy because I have some other writing (a novel and two different short story series) that I will write under a pen name (not a persona) in a different genre.

Looking forward to that.

Good writing day today, though not excellent.

Fiction Words: 3315

Writing of The Scent of Acacia (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
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Day 7…… 1471 words. Total words to date…… 23117 words
Day 8…… 2843 words. Total words to date…… 25960 words
Day 9…… 1782 words. Total words to date…… 27742 words
Day 10… 3315 words. Total words to date…… 31057 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 10004
Total fiction words for the year…… 613995

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Writing Into the DarkLeave a comment

The Journal, Saturday, 12/5

December 5, 2015

Hi Folks,

I seriously considered taking a day off writing today. I was going to do some reading instead. But my fingers and my mind keep leaning toward my writing computer, so writing it is.

Last night I skimmed the 30 pages of introductory material in Working Days, which I've now learned is actually the book inside which Steinbeck's daily journal is allegedly secreted. I hope to find the journal itself sometime later today during a break from writing. (grin)

Didn't find time to look today. The search continues in a day or two.

Last night also I read half of a book by Algis Budrys titled **Writing to the Point**. Folks, this thing is excellent. Seriously. You can get it as part of a bundle right now (until December 27) at https://storybundle.com/nano. (On this book, I recommend from the beginning up through Chapter 6. After that, skip to Writing SF and Fantasy at the end. It has to do with more than SF&F.)

Seriously, go there. Check it out. In the same "basic" bundle (only about $15) you can get Rusch's **Discoverability** and Zuckerman's bible, **Writing the Blockbuster Novel**. Plus three other titles. If you go for the bigger bundle, for $25 you get a whole bunch of others, including some from DWS.

The Day

Rolled out a little before 3 this morning. Outside it's a regular heat wave at 37 degrees.

Probably no walk today but we'll see. (I was right. No walk.)

Today's Writing

Well, I had a breakthrough with the novel today, but not the kind you might expect.

Yesterday I wrote that I thought it was going to be a sprint to the end of the novel. Wishful thinking, maybe.

Every time I've put my fingers on the keyboard for the past few days, something didn't feel right. This wasn't my conscious mind. This was that quiet little nagging voice inside. You know the one.

Usually when I feel like that it's because I took a wrong turn somewhere. Everything I wrote after that was just compounding the wrong turn.

So this morning, I made myself start at the beginning of the story and just read.

Sure enough, about halfway through the current document, I found the wrong turn. It so obvious didn't fit that it was ludicrous. I had allowed my conscious mind in. I was trying to force something into the novel that is unnecessary. So everything after that point was suspect.

So as I write this I'm still reading, keeping what is in line with the story, and cutting the unnecessary stuff. (I am putting it in a separate file so I can keep track of the word count.) When something new needs to be written, I write it. When that segment is finished, I go back to reading, etc. Once I get it pared back down to the story, I'll fire on toward the ending. Yes, it will be that close.

Excellent writing day today, when you consider these are new words on top of all the cutting and reading.

Fiction Words: 4196

Writing of **The Scent of Acacias** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

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Day 7…… 1471 words. Total words to date…… 23117 words
Day 8…… 2843 words. Total words to date…… 25960 words
Day 9…… 1782 words. Total words to date…… 27742 words
Day 10… 3315 words. Total words to date…… 31057 words
Day 11… 4196 words. Total words to date…… 35253 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 14200
Total fiction words for the year…… 618191

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the DarkLeave a comment

The Journal, Sunday, 12/6

December 6, 2015

Hi Folks,

Well, today is actually a day off for me, such as it is. I did begin reading in my WIP where I left off yesterday. I made a little headway but I had a rough night last night so I didn't get far.

Here's the link again for the bundle of writing books just in case you are considering it but haven't acted yet: https://storybundle.com/nano.

The Day

Rolled out right at 3, but I probably should have gone back to bed. Ugh.

Anyway, looking forward to sitting on the couch and watching football this afternoon. Since I was sitting up with my stomach last night anyway, I did watch one of the better college games I've seen in awhile, the Big 10 championship. It came down to the final 30 seconds when Michigan State beat undefeated Iowa for the crown.

Today it will be my Arizona Cardinals vs. the Rams, then the Broncos vs. the Chargers, and then the last hour of the Panthers vs. the Saints.

Definitely no walk today.

Today's Writing

I can't overemphasize the importance of the breakthrough on the novel yesterday. I'm calm again about the novel and I know it will flow to the ending now.

I needed that confidence today since I'm under the weather. That confidence is what enabled me not to screw with the story beyond my capabilities today. I know it'll still be there tomorrow, and that it will still flow well when I get back to it in earnest.

So for today, I started out calling it a day off. Then I did what I was comfortable doing and no more. But I'm still gonna count it as a writing day below.

Should be back full strength tomorrow.

Fiction Words: 1290

Writing of **The Scent of Acacia** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

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Day 8…… 2843 words. Total words to date…… 25960 words
Day 9…… 1782 words. Total words to date…… 27742 words
Day 10… 3315 words. Total words to date…… 31057 words
Day 11… 4196 words. Total words to date…… 35253 words
Day 12… 1290 words. Total words to date…… 36543 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 15490
Total fiction words for the year…… 619481

Categories The Daily JournalLeave a comment

The Journal, Monday, 12/7

December 7, 2015

Hi Folks,

Feeling a lot better today. Hit the sack early last night. Fired up to continue my journey through The Scent of Acacias.

The Day

Rolled out right at 1:30, very early. Spent a couple hours relaxing my way into the day. Sipping coffee (18 ounce mug) and messing around on the computer.

I spent about a half-hour putting new words in the novel but my subconscious kept nagging me. Finally I stopped, opened the dashboard on my website, and double checked my upcoming posts on the main blog. Good thing I did.

I revised the post that's due for Dec 11, and while I was there I wrote a new post and got it scheduled for Dec 21, so I'm a little bit ahead on that front. I'll write some more and prepost them after I finish this novel.

I think I need to figure out how to start keeping tabs on nonfiction stuff that I write too. After all, that's part of my life and my output as a professional writer. I'll work on that later today while on a break from writing. (Um, nope. I'll work on that tomorrow or the next day. I'm so "in" the novel right now I don't wanna do anything else.)

Anyway, the little subconscious voice is satisfied for now, so back to the novel to play.

Wrote a couple of sessions, then out for a walk. A little over 2 miles, a little over an hour away from the desk.

And while I was out, the novel became clear. I was going in the right direction all along. It just happens to be a place I don't want to go. Have you ever had part of a story that will affect you so strongly that you just don't want to write it?

Thing is, it will affect the reader that strongly too. So here we go.

Today's Writing

I spent another hour or so working through some earlier stuff, piecing here and there. But part of my stop/start hesitation in going through that process was due, I think, to knowing the final climactic scene and not wanting to get there. Does that make sense? As I said, it is a massively emotional scene.

So I skipped ahead and wrote it. First time I've ever done that.

Just now, as I write this (2:37 p.m.) I spent an hour writing the big climactic scene. And frankly, I can barely breathe. Nothing I've ever written has affected me like this before. Oof.

So break time, and when I come back maybe I'll be able to write the bit of the novel that's left before the big climax. And then I'll have to add a resolution. I don't know yet what that will be, but I know it won't be longer than a couple hundred words.

Nope. Wrote couple more sessions of new words, and switched some stuff around, restored some

stuff I cut the other day. Still gonna be a day or two to get all the bits and pieces where they belong. But that's okay. Now it's after 5 and I can only say I wish I could go longer on it today.

Fiction Words: 3224

Writing of **The Scent of Acacias** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

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Day 8…… 2843 words. Total words to date…… 25960 words
Day 9…… 1782 words. Total words to date…… 27742 words
Day 10… 3315 words. Total words to date…… 31057 words
Day 11… 4196 words. Total words to date…… 35253 words
Day 12… 1290 words. Total words to date…… 36543 words
Day 13… 3224 words. Total words to date…… 39767 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 18714
Total fiction words for the year…… 622705

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the DarkLeave a comment

The Journal, Tuesday, 12/8

December 8, 2015

Hi Folks,

I'm kind'a hoping today will be the last day on this novel. We'll see. If it isn't today, it will be tomorrow. You know, barring fire, flood, etc. Unless I'm able to get my laptop out.

For one thing, I'd like very much to have it out in time for Christmas shoppers. I also hope to have a boxed set out by then, and at least one of my distributors (D2D) wants items turned in by December 14th to be sure they're "live" by Christmas.

Of course, once it's published it's "out there" forever if you want it to be. And I do. Still, I'd rather the sales would start sooner than later.

The Day

Rolled out just after 4 this morning. Guess I needed some sleep. Not a lot else to say about the

day. I wrote, moved this here, that there, wrote some more, walked around the yard for 15-20 minutes, wrote some more, grabbed some chips. You know. Normal stuff.

Today's Writing

Wow. I mean, wow. When I sat down this morning I wasn't certain whether I'd finish today or tomorrow. I had left myself a note on the manuscript to write one interim scene about a particular event that I had somehow forgotten earlier. So that was my jumpstart into the storyline today.

I wrote that scene (a little over 900 words) and a transition scene (a little over 500 words) that popped up as necessary.

Wrote three more sessions, including two endings. (grin)

I also adapted another short story. This one is from Book 3, Wes Crowley Texas Ranger. Parts of The Scent of Acacias refer back to this scene, so probably not a bad bet to make it a short story in its own right. Only took 87 new words too.

Overall, a pretty good day of writing for me.

Fiction Words: 3217

Writing of **"Wes Crowley and the Bank Robbers"** (short story)
Day 1…… 0087 words. Total words to date…… 0087 words (done)

Writing of **The Scent of Acacias** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

Day 1…… 3887 words. Total words to date…… 3887 words
Day 2…… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 6979 words
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Day 9…… 1782 words. Total words to date…… 27742 words
Day 10… 3315 words. Total words to date…… 31057 words
Day 11… 4196 words. Total words to date…… 35253 words
Day 12… 1290 words. Total words to date…… 36543 words
Day 13… 3224 words. Total words to date…… 39767 words
Day 14… 3140 words. Total words to date…… 42907 words (done)

Total fiction words for the month…… 21951
Total fiction words for the year…… 625942

Categories The Daily JournalTags The Writing Life, Writing, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional

Writer Series, Writing Into the DarkLeave a comment

The Journal, Wednesday, 12/9

December 9, 2015

Hi Folks,

Okay. I thought the novel was done, but I just wasn't happy with the ending. I knew it wasn't "right" but I wasn't sure why.

So I scrapped some stuff (not a lot), wrote some new stuff, and now it's good.

By the way, ALL of this that I've been doing for the past 21 months is because I am an adherent of Heinlein's Rules. If you want to hike up your productivity as a writer (write more and write better), follow Heinlein's Rules. More on this toward the end of this post.

Turned out the novel needed one more scene as well, and a completely different resolution. So this one took 15 days instead of 14 days. I'm not complaining. (grin)

The Day

Rolled out right at 3 this morning. My subconsicous already was firing on all cylinders. It had worked out the right ending and resolution for the novel as I slept. Excellent.

For those of you who like "process," at least for an individual novel, over the course of this novel, I initially cut (threw away, deleted) 11,410 words. It just wasn't right. Will some of that someday end up in another novel or short stories? Maybe. I threw it away, but it still came out of my head. So it can come out again. And it wasn't "wasted" because it got me, eventually, to where I am today on this book.

Then I started over. I typed the title, hit the Enter key a couple times, typed the first word and kept going.

I took a few wrong turns along the way, and later recognized only a couple of those were truly wrong turns. I sometimes had trouble shutting out my consicous, critical mind. But that's all right too. It's all a learning process. It's a series of lessons.

In the end (or "when the smoke cleared," since this was a western), I wrote 44,998 words of new fiction. (That does not include the 11,410 words I threw out at the beginning.)

Of those 44,998 words, I deleted some scenes that seemed to me separate of the actual storyline of this novel. So the final novel that's going to publication later today is 40,365 words. There you go. The full accounting. (grin) This is the most extra words I've ever written. The fewest extra words were 14.

When I finished the novel and the spell check, I came here to do this. Now it's almost 9 a.m. I'm going to prepare a cover, do the formatting, and get this puppy Out There. I plan to write a short story later today, and at least part of tomorrow I hope to spend putting together a boxed set of the nine novels in the Wes Crowley saga. This was the final novel in that series.

Okay, now it's almost 12:30. I've done all of the above plus published **The Scent of Acacias** to D2D, Smashwords and Amazon. I also created a new page for it on StoneThread Publishing and updated the Wes Crowley Saga page there. I think that's all I have to do for now. Oh, I also recorded it on my Fiction spreadsheet.

I don't remember whether I've talked about that before. I believe in keeping good records. Not doing so can bite you in the whatsit down the line.

In the first section of my fiction spreadsheet, it has the title and author of each work, which collection it's in (for short stories), the publication date, word count, ebook price, page count, and print price. In the next section it has the buy link (URL for the book page) for Smashwords, Amazon, Apple, Kobo, B&N and CreateSpace. (The books are available in over 1400 separate venues now, but those are the biggies.) In the third section it has the ISBNs for D2D, Pronoun (not going yet), Smashwords, XinXii and CreateSpace. This gives me a ready tool I can use to tell anyone at any time where they can purchase the title from the retailer of their choice. I use it more often than you might think.

By the way, I just glanced at Dean's site. The introduction to his Heinlein's Rules lecture is at http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/heinleins-rules-introduction/. I recommend following him for awhile even if you don't follow him all the time. He also has another good post there today called Learning is Attitude.

Today's Writing

Less than halfway through my first mugga coffee, I started writing. That was about 3:30 a.m.

Now, less than 4 hours later, I hit three short sessions (and two short breaks and one long break) for a total of 2091 new words. And the novel is finished. And the ending and resolution are exactly right.

And I meant to do more today (as I mentioned earlier), but I just didn't. I'm gonna post this, and then I'm gonna prep a cover and publish the short story I put together yesterday.

Fiction Words: 2091

Writing of **The Scent of Acacias** (Book 9 in the Wes Crowley saga)

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Day 11… 4196 words. Total words to date…… 35253 words
Day 12… 1290 words. Total words to date…… 36543 words
Day 13… 3224 words. Total words to date…… 39767 words
Day 14… 3140 words. Total words to date…… 42907 words
Day 15… 2091 words. Total words to date…… 44998 words (NOW it's done)

Total fiction words for the month…… 24043
Total fiction words for the year…… 628035

Categories The Daily JournalLeave a comment

The Journal, Thursday, 12/10

December 10, 2015

Hi Folks,

Okay, I had a bit of a rough night last night, but the lag isn't too bad. So my goal for today is to write two separate short stories. If I can do that, I should shoot straight past my daily publishable-words writing goal.

This is my way of jumpstarting myself back into writing after finishing the novel. Helps me avoid the post-writeum depression.

I've mentioned before that I don't celebrate finishing a novel. For one thing, that would be like a mechanic celebrating putting an engine back together after an overhaul. Plus it means I'm leaving behind some people and situations I enjoyed, so what's to celebrate?

On the other hand, I do celebrate a great scene coming together or a great ending and resolution falling into place, as it did yesterday. That's like the same mechanic feeling satisfied that during the overhaul he increased the horsepower by 20 percent. (grin)

The Day

Rolled out just after 3 this morning, mostly awake, so I must have gotten more sleep than I thought.

Little girl cat (my youngest daughter) helped with that. She stayed in bed last night until about 2:30 when she came strolling in and jumped up on the couch beside me. She groomed for a moment, then curled up in the crook of my elbow and went back to sleep. Good girl. She was my alarm. Then she hit Snooze. Plus she was reunited with Dad. Made me smile. And we call *them*

simple creatures.

So just after 3 I made my first mugful, let her go play, and completed my commute to my office (about 20 feet from the couch, 70 if you add-in the diversion for coffee).

Then I started writing this. Now I'm gonna turn to the writing 'puter and write something over there. Back in a bit. Oh, it's almost exactly 4:30.

Today's Writing

Well, by 10 a.m. I had the first short story finished. Three sessions and two breaks. During the breaks I read Dean's stuff (he has the first two chapters of Heinlein's Rules up) and spent about 10 minutes on Facebook with a favorite niece. I also signed up for one of his Classic online workshops.

The Classic workshops are the ones that used to take 6 weeks and he would assign and grade homework, etc. Then he'd leave the lessons up for a couple weeks, then close them off again. He calls these Classic because he stopped carrying them live but he still offers them (sans feedback on homework, which never was personal anyway) for half the price.

It's a good value at $150 vs. $300. When I get through the current course, I'll let you know what I thought of it. Oh, also, once you pay for the course, you can go back to it whenever you want. So like I said, it's a good value.

About 10:30 I decided to work on the drudge stuff for two stories (the one I wrote today and the one I adapted a couple days ago). Okay, so for each of those I created a promo document (title, description, keywords), formatted it (once for Smashwords, once for D2D and Amazon), created a cover and published it to Smashwords, D2D, Amazon and my website on the Free Story of the Week. I'm up to February 15 now with stories of the week. Oh, then I updated my Short Story page on my website. Finished all that by 1, then took 20 minutes or so to walk out in the yard. Then back here to record what I've been doing, then a shower.

Now it's almost 2 p.m. I was turning to write another story, but I'm still tired from the coughing bouts last night. So instead of playing with another story right now, I'm gonna clean up a few things, publish this, and then do some reading. I'll start writing again tomorrow.

Oh, I did figure out how to add my nonfiction writing into my totals. So you'll see a daily and monthly total beginning today, and an annual total beginning next year, same as with the fiction. Nonfiction includes this blog (the parts that are unique each day) and the Pro-Writers blog. I don't include emails and all that nonsense. And of course it will be approximate, but probably not off by more than a couple hundred words per year or so.

Fiction Words: 2556 (I'll take it)

Nonfiction Words: 766

Writing of “Dr. Zimmer in the Amazon” (short story)

Day 1…… 2556 words. Total words to date…… 2556 words (done)

Total fiction words for the month…… 26598
Total fiction words for the year…… 630589

Total nonfiction words for the month… 7203
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 49305 (since September 1)

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Categories The Daily JournalTags Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Short Fiction, The Writing Life, Writing, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Friday, 12/11

December 11, 2015

Hi Folks,

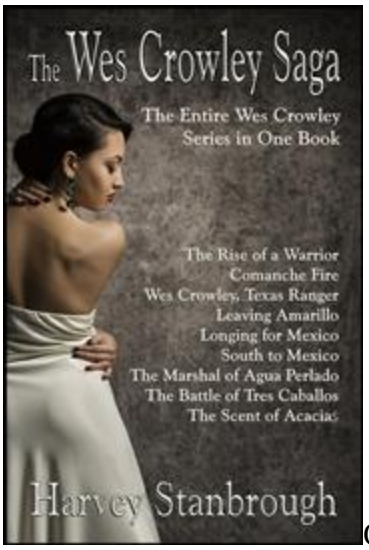
Still under the weather a bit today but definitely on the mend. It feels good knowing by this time tomorrow I ought’a be back to my normal level of unhealthinessicity. (grin)

The Day

Rolled out a little before 3 this morning. Sometime overnight my subconscious set up an alarm reminding me to get the “boxed set” of the Wes Crowley novels out for that one guy who might want it for Christmas. (grin)

So in the midst of my first mugga coffee, I started copying/pasting and formatting. Then spell checking, reparagraphing here and there, revising my use of ellipses and em dashes, etc. Basically I brought the entire series up to my current skill level as a writer. Amazing how much stuff I’ve learned since I wrote the first word of that series back on October 19, 2014.

And no, I don’t usually go back over old stuff. I did so this time only because I was putting the whole thing in one book. And I didn’t change words (except a few errors I found). Only paragraphing really, for readability and pacing. Over 800 pages, just under 415,000 words. Cool.



Created a promo document and a new cover for the overall series (that's it over there on the left) and then resized all nine novel covers and inserted them in the book as well, one at the beginning of each novel. Isn't Coralín pretty?

So that's all I did from about 3:30 right up through 10:30. That was almost an hour ago. Then I published the thing to D2D, Smashwords and Amazon. Then I came here to write this, and now I'm gonna break for a bit, maybe visit Dean's site (new Heinlein's Rules stuff over there) before getting to the writing computer.

Sometime in the next few days I'll do some research to see whether I can find a place that produces the boxed-set boxes. If so, and if they aren't terribly expensive, and if I don't have to order a b'jillion of them at one time, I hope to sell this creature through StoneThread Publishing in paper as a boxed set too. Failing that, I might have it put in one Lahahaha HONG volume.

Oops. On break since I wrote the above, and forgot to put the new cover on the publisher's site and create a new page for that one. So off to do that now, THEN to the writing 'puter. Here's the book page if you wanna look at it.

Okay, got the updates done, then had to go find my little girl cat. Now that everything and everyone is where it/they're supposed to be, maybe I can play for awhile.

Today's Writing

I just want you guys to know, turning out a lot of words doesn't mean I sit here and write all day. What it takes is getting to the writing computer, and then writing.

Case in point, at 10:30 this morning I made my first attempt to get to the writing computer. I finally got there shortly before 2 p.m. Hey, stuff happens. And when it happens around here, it seems to always come off the blades of a fan. (grin)

Had three frantic sessions crammed in between other stuff. That's all right. Had a blast while I was writing. And it's a funny story, depending on which way your sense of humor is warped.

Now I'm gonna post this (almost 5 p.m.) and put down some numbers.

Fiction Words: 2913
Nonfiction Words: 602

Writing of "Makilak Crismazizzle" (short story)

Day 1…… 2913 words. Total words to date…… 2913 words (done)

Total fiction words for the month…… 29511
Total fiction words for the year…… 633502

Total nonfiction words for the month… 7805
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 49907 (since September 1)

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Categories The Daily JournalTags Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Humor, Short Fiction, The Writing Life, Writing, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Saturday, 12/12

December 12, 2015

Hi Folks,

This was mostly a non-writing day. I wasn't really planning it to be a day off, but that's how it turned out. So about 2:30 p.m., I called it.

Suffice it to say I really need to start getting two to three hours of writing done while the world is quiet in the early morning hours. Then no matter what happens the rest of the day, at least I got something done.

The Day

Woke up around 1 to rain pounding on the roof. Dozed off and on until I finally crawled out a little before 3.

The rain had stopped so I let the little girl out to play. Got my coffee, checked email, kicked around on Facebook. All of that was about a half-hour. In all that time I never checked the weather site.

Then I heard something that sounded like a train. I thought it was raining again, hard, but it didn't sound quite like that. Worried about the baby, so I got my ball cap and sandals and

flashlight and went out looking. HUGE wind and sleet/snow. Found her, got her in, then started to publish the story I wrote yesterday.

Well, I read over it first since I was dead tired when I wrote it. It wasn't bad, but I added almost 500 words and adjusted the character's voice to one of my favorite "attitude" accents. So I updated it below. I had hoped to write a lot more today. Uhhh, no. But that's all right. Writing is a game of averages.

Also updated a page on the publisher site with buy links and did some other little stuff there. Then I came here.

With the little girl in and wanting out, I type a little (nonfiction stuff, website stuff), and a cat passes between me and the keyboard. I type a little more, and a cat passes between me and the keyboard. It's a cycle, like the tides. (grin)

So that was the first couple hours.

Okay, I created a promo document and a cover for the new story. I like the cover, so I'm putting it over there on the left again. Got the thing published to my current three distributors.

Then I sent an email to Smashwords asking them to please update the Channel Manager on their site so it has a bulk option. I have over 180 titles on their site. Every time they add a new market that I'm already selling to through a different distributor, I have to go line by line through four pages of entries, stop at each title, scroll to the side, then click a radio button that says Opt Out. (The other distributors all have options to opt in or out in bulk.) So we'll see how that goes.

Got the story and cover published also to the Short Story page on my website and pre-posted as the free short story of the week for February 22. For the short story page, that makes

119 short stories. Who knew 119 would not be a prime number? But it's 17 rows of 7 pics. Go figure.

I ate a quick breakfast at my desk around 6:30, then started skimming pictures. A few days ago I was tasked with going through some of my landscape photos to select several to have printed and send to the kids for Christmas gifts.

My photos are not organized. Which is like saying at 2 p.m. on any August day in Yuma it will be a little warm. In my Photos folder I have 140 subfolders, each with anywhere from 100 to 800 or more pics inside.

I started picking pics at 7 a.m. and by 7:30 I had a few picked out, with a few more to find. Then the best-laid plans of a man (me) were overruled by the best laid plans of a mouse (I call him Jonas). I hadda go capture Jonas, transport him outside and drop him over the fence. Amazing how agile those little things are.

I wound up moving a dining room table, a treadmill, an antique wash stand, a gun case we inherited from Indiana, and various and sundry other smaller items. All this time I was packin' heat in the form of a 3w x5l x3d thin-cardboard box, a stiff front cover from an old small Marine Corps logbook (to cover the box once the mouse was trapped inside) and a small but bright flashlight (to find the mouse by the glare of his beady little eyes). All of that in two hands. Oh, it was a great deal of fun.

So the Jonas Games started right at 7:30 and ended right at 8:30 with me depositing him over the back fence. He scurried off with never so much as a by your leave or adios or anything else.

Then I went back to selecting photos. It was a pretty quick and much less selective process from there on out. But it still took until 9 a.m. to be done with it.

That was over five hours ago. Ugh. I don't hover well, folks. I hover sort'a like a rock. Let me explain.

Please understand, I realize I'm probably wrong from the outset on this— I'm a guy, after all— but I tend to make up my mind about what I'm going to do, and then I get up and do it. Or I make up my mind that I'm NOT going to do something, and then I move on. It's a simple, easy, stress-free, hover-free way to live.

I'm not good with hovering. I am not the guy who would ever put together a committee to study the feasibility of meeting to determine whether we should meet to consider locking the doors and turning out the lights when the meeting is over. No sir. I'm more the kind of guy that people like me would hire to stroll past that meeting room and toss in a live beehive just to add a little color to those poor souls' drab existence. Or a CS (teargas) grenade. Whatever.

To slap you with a cliché, life's too short to spend it hovering. Do or don't do. And for goodness' sake, if you ever DO want to hover, go hover someplace where there's a pool table and some friends with beer money and call me. Well, I guess that wouldn't really be hovering, would it?

That's a decision. And a pretty good one.

Okay, so for the last five hours I've been caught up in a vacuum. So I've been doing things that require concentration but not unbroken suspension of the beta state of consciousness. So no fiction writing.

I worked on the slides for the neat little slide show on the home page of the publisher site. I created each slide myself a couple weeks ago. I re-created five of them today, saved them, resized them, uploaded them, deleted the old ones they were replacing, then put them in place in the slider. Then I experimented with various transition effects and settled on a boring but effective fade thing.

Finally I put a "quick, let's just get to it already" menu at the top of that home page as well. I don't like having to go on a quest to find my way off a splash page, so I figure nobody else does either. So now, in addtion to the four photos and three other "picture" links on the home page, there's also a quick menu at the top.

Okay, interspersed with all the stuff I documented above, I kept coming back here in 10- and 15-minute spurts to add to this post.

Around 12:45 I had a quick bite of lunch. As happens on days that I actually get some writing done, at 1 p.m. I thought about putting my fingers on the keyboard and writing whatever comes. But some days fingers just naturally want to curl into the fetal position. Or maybe that's the jugular-clutching position. So no fiction writing today, other than the little bit you see below.

Today's Writing

Added not quite 500 words to the story I mostly wrote yesterday, then did all the stuff you see above, then came here to add this at about 3. I'm gonna post this, then go sit on the couch and sulk while I watch what's left of the Army-Navy game.

Okay, so at least I got the 483 words, albeit almost inadvertently. Still, better than rolling a zero.

Fiction Words: 483
Nonfiction Words: 1386

Writing of "Makilak Crismazizzle" (short story)

Day 1…… 2913 words. Total words to date…… 2913 words
Day 2…… 0483 words. Total words to date…… 3396 words (done)

Total fiction words for the month…… 29994
Total fiction words for the year…… 633985

Total nonfiction words for the month… 9191
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 51293 (since September 1)

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Categories The Daily JournalTags Frustration, Harvey Stanbrough, Life Happens, The Writing Life, Writing, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Sunday, 12/13

December 13, 2015

Hi Folks,

Today is the first day of me going back to writing earlier instead of allowing my quiet time to be taken up with other nonsense.

I'm allowing myself a half-hour to an hour and a half administrative time. During that time I'll check and respond to emails, update my Fiction spreadsheet and tend to other administrative matters.

I'll also take care of the kitten and come here to begin the Journal entry for the day.

Today I'm going to try something I haven't tried in awhile. I'm anxious to get back into writing something longer than a short story. So in a few minutes I'm going to open my file on Norval Babineaux. (The Advent of Simon Stark novel sprang from it earlier.) I like the characters and the setting, so I'm going to go back to it. I'll read through it first, then put my fingers on the keyboard and just write whatever comes.

Below you'll see a "brought forward" number of words (not new words) and then new words written after that each day. If it works out the way I expect it will, it will turn into a novel or novella.

The Day

Rolled out a little before 2. Email, coffee, the kitten and here to write the above. This morning my admin time took a little over two hours. It included updating my Fiction spreadsheet with new buy links (D2D sends me an email when a title is available at a new vendor) and selecting a few professional pics to share with a friend for a cover she's trying to put on her latest title.

Okay, almost 4 a.m. so now to Norval Babineaux.

I started reading through Babineaux, allowing myself to touch it here and there as I moved through it. All of this was in creative voice, just reading and adding what sprang to mind natuarally. I wasn't looking for how many times I used the word "that" or any of that nonsense.

About halfway through the reading I took a mandated break to conduct a catch and release on a

mouse that my little girl cornered in the living room. Didn't have to move furniture, etc. and this one took all of five minutes from spotting him to dropping him over the back fence. It's that time of year, but I really wish they'd find somewhere else to go.

Read through some more, added maybe another hundred words and took a break to fill an order for The Wes Crowley Saga direct from StoneThread Publishing. Cool. He got a better price than he would have anywhere else, and the author (I) got a bigger slice of the pie. Win win.

In case you're wondering, here are the figures:

The author gets 85% of the retail price for direct sales at ST Publishing.
The author gets 82% of the retail price for sales at Smashwords.
The author gets 68% of the retail price for sales at B&N, Kobo, Apple etc. BUT
The author gets only 35% of the retail price for sales at Amazon. (Go figure.)

Took a break from 8:30 to about 9 a.m. to do some other little stuff, and I'm going back to the story now. Gonna hit it until about noon. That'll get me through what I wrote originally and maybe plus a little. Then I'm gonna watch football, probably for the rest of the day. I might get back to ol' Norval today, but probably not.

Today's Writing

Okay, I did a few reading sessions, each time adding maybe 10 to maybe 20 words.

Then three decent new sessions for the totals you see below. Not bad for a (voluntarily) abbreviated day.

Fiction Words: 3059
Nonfiction Words: 650

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 33053
Total fiction words for the year…… 637044

Total nonfiction words for the month… 9841
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 51943 (since September 1)

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Categories The Daily JournalTags Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, The Writing

Life, Writing, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Monday, 12/14

December 14, 2015

Hi Folks,

Well, on the second day of my new system of writing during my quiet time, I messed it up. (grin)

On the up side, I limited my waking up time to about ten minutes. On the down side, I spent the next two and a half hours on admin stuff, prepping The Scent of Acacias for layout for print. Sigh. I forgot I hadn't done that yet.

I already have folks wanting boxed sets of the trade paperbacks. Hard to sell those when I don't have them prepped yet. (grin)

I need to name my writing computer. Maybe I'll call him Hal as a nod to 2001: A Space Oddyssey. I've always found it disrespectful that Picard barks "Computer" to preface a request to the ship, yet he recognizes the android/robot Data as a viable life form.

The Day

Rolled out right at 3 after a rough night, the first part of which I spent sitting up on the couch. I keep saying I'm gonna get a recliner, but if I do that I might not ever get anything done again. (grin) Little girl cat came in and got me around 11, so I picked her up and we both went to bed. She's such a good kit. She takes care of me as much as I take care of her. Give that girl opposable thumbs, there's nothing she couldn't do.

So email and the first mugga coffee, then the stuff above and then here to start this journal entry. And now it's almost 5:30 and I'm turning for the first time to my old buddy Hal.

Today's Writing

Well, Hal and I did all right. We did a little more reconstructive surgery, but mostly just writing off into the dark. I love that. Especially when I have talkative characters, a tense situation, and a desire on the part of one of the "good" characters not to defuse the situation but to nuke the bad guys.

Okay, the scene I'm talking about was a five year old girl and a six year old girl facing down five older kids. So no nukes, but some serious attitude adjustments. Great fun.

Today I worked through three "normal" sessions of about an hour and two shorter ones.

I think I have one more wound to close tomorrow (maybe two), and will do a lot of writing into the dark to cover the patch. After that it's onward and outward to the end.

Y'know, I enjoy these characters so much, I hope they do somethign I can turn into a true series. (Not a saga, one long story, like the Wes Crowley thing, but an actual series.)

Fiction Words: 3436
Nonfiction Words: 492

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)
Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3486 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 36489
Total fiction words for the year…… 640480

Total nonfiction words for the month… 10333
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 52435 (since September 1)

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Categories The Daily JournalTags Harvey Stanbrough, The Writing Life, Writing, Writing Into the Dark, Writing Setting

The Journal, Tuesday, 12/15

December 15, 2015

Hi Folks,

Back on track for writing during my quiet time. In fact, during the wake-up, I wrote an article, basically, to rebuff a HuffPo article in which the author got pretty much everything wrong. As my response was not really long, I'm including it in this post.

For reference, the full Huffington Post article is here:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/janet-tavakoli/apple-taxes-authors-patie_b_8711882.html

I hate it when such obviously slanted stuff is offered (and bought, unfortunately, by many writers) as fact. Here's my rebuttal.

The first sentence of Ms. Tavakoli's article is an outright falsehood. The rest of the article is misleading at best. No doubt this is the result of either extremely shoddy research or an intentional and very steep slant.

Let me set the record straight from personal experience. I have been selling my works through Apple since 2011. I don't have an account with Apple, nor do I own any iProducts.

Originally I sold to them through a distributor called Smashwords. I still could but when a new distributor with a much cleaner user interface came online (Draft2Digital, or D2D) I began using them instead to distribute my work to several major venues.

Today, I submit my work (184 short stories, novels and nonfiction books to date) through Smashwords, D2D, XinXii (only long works) and Amazon. As a result, my titles appear within a week in over 400 sales venues and 1200 libraries worldwide.

Ms. Tavakoli's article is at least in the ballpark where she talks about venue shares of sales, but she completely omitted several major players, including Kobo, B&N, Baker & Taylor, OmniLit, Overdrive, Tolino (Germany), Rakuten (Japan) and Gardners (UK) as well as the subscription services, such as Scribd and 24symbols.

My sales personally are about 50% Amazon, 20% StoneThreadPublishing.com (the reader gets a big discount) and 10% Apple with the rest distributed among the others.

I encourage writers to indie publish. It isn't difficult, and it's far better than giving a large share of YOUR royalties to people you will never meet who do absolutely nothing to earn it. I also encourage indie publishers to do their own research and avoid such obviously hard-slanted articles as Ms. Tavakoli's HuffPo piece. Or email me. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Got the notice from CreateSpace that Book 9 of the Crowley series is ready to proof, so I'll do that later today and then order a few copies of several books so I have sets available.

Later today sometime I also have to write some nonfiction for my other blog.

The Day

Rolled out right at 2. Too cold to let the baby out yet so she's snoozin' somewhere. The first hour went by quickly with email that included the stuff above plus responding quickly to some Facebook stuff. Then here to start this. Now to make my second mugga stuff.

I spent another half-hour putting together a list of things I have to get done today. When more than two or three nonfiction things pile up on me and they're necessary, I make a temporary Do Today list and leave it on my desktop. I won't think about those things while I'm writing because I have them listed for viewing later.

Off to play with Hal.

Got two good sessions on Babineaux with a break in between before 6:30. Now I'm gonna proof The Scent of Acacias, then order books. I'll mark that off my list, then go back to Babineaux.

Okay, proofed Scent, ordered enough copies of various books to be able to mail out 4 full sets of the series at a moment's notice, then dealt with some stuff on Facebook. I guess that's not too bad for 2 hours gone. Back to Babineaux.

To knock another item off my list I searched high and low for a clock (free or premium) I could download for a website client. She wants something with an ocean theme. They just don't exist. Sorry Ronny.

There were a few other things I didn't get done on my nonfiction to-do list, but I'll move them to tomorrow. Except writing a blog post or two for the Pro-Writers Series. So I'm gonna close down the fiction writing now and go do that.

Back to Babineaux in the morning.

Oh, and Heinlein's Rules Chapter 4 is up over at Dean's place.

By the way, I don't like that this little journal eats up the main page every day. So probably I'm gonna switch this back to a different website. You shouldn't notice any difference unless you read it on the website. And even then you won't notice much. Also, service should be uninterrupted.

Today's Writing

Three good sessions, not a lot of interruptions. Still not the stellar day I'm looking for but not bad either. The novel keeps moving forward so I'm good with that.

Fiction Words: 3056
Nonfiction Words: 1563

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 39545
Total fiction words for the year…… 643536

Total nonfiction words for the month… 11895
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 53998 (since September 1)

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Categories The Daily JournalTags Applying the Craft, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, The Writing Life, Writing Into the Dark

Effective December 16, 2015, the Daily Journal has moved to a dedicated website

at http://HEStanbrough.com.

The Journal, Wednesday, 12/16

December 16, 2015 by Harvey

Hi Folks,

Well, here I am, comin' to you live from the "new" site over at HEStanbrough.com. If you visit, you'll find the overall design looks a lot like the main site, but this one is only for this Journal so it isn't nearly as complex.

The Day

Rolled out shortly after 2:30. WAY too cold to let the baby out, but she was insistent. So I got nada done on Babineaux up until now (7:30). Ugh.

During wake-up I responded to email and added a video to a website for a client. Then I went to my MailChimp account and switched the feed from the other site to this one so this post will actually go out late this afternoon. I also adjusted the post time to 5 p.m. instead of 6.

A half-hour into the day (so around 3) I turned to Hal to work on Babineaux. Over the next couple of hours, I wrote maybe 500 words of new fiction. Hard to write when you're constantly getting swaffed across the mouth with a kitten tail. Or a kitten is climing your leg (I'm dressed in sweats). Or she's sitting on the desk to your left staring holes through you.

So I went to some of the other tasks I needed to do. I hadn't let go yet of the idea of creating a clock to put on my client's website. I ended up creating the three clock faces on the right sidebar at the site, to the right of this blog post. You can take a look if you want to. If you want something like this and you have a wordpress website, I'd be happy to help.

Okay, well, 6 hours pretty well shot. Very little writing. Between creating something new (that was fun) and then the frustration of my client not following my directions and the back and forth of that for an hour or so, I finally got a slightly altered clock on her site.

Now I'm gonna break for awhile. Very difficult to write when my brain is fused to the reality of the intense frustrations that come around now and then.

Actually I think I'm gonna crack open the classic workshop I bought and listen to a few videos. If I get back to fiction writing today, great. If not, well, that's why there's a tomorrow.

Turned out to be a great day, but making it a learning day was one of the better decisions I've made in awhile. I listened to the classic workshop titled Writing Novels in Series.

You will notice that I took this course less than a week after I finished the ninth and final novel in a series. That's the way I'm wired, I guess. After all, as my daughter once told me, Dad is just ADD spelled sideways.

I learned a great deal about writing series, writing novels and writing in general, all advanced stuff, that I will apply as I continue writing. Great stuff. In fact, one video (about 8 minutes) was well worth the cost of the whole course. Amazing.

So this has officially become a day off from writing, but a day-on for learning. This will also be a good test of the first posting from the new site.

Today's Writing

No fiction writing today. I had about 500 words very early, but I'm not going to count that until tomorrow.

Fiction Words: XXXX
Nonfiction Words: 627

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… XXXX words. Total words to date…… XXXXX words

Total fiction words for the month…… 36489
Total fiction words for the year…… 640480

Total nonfiction words for the month… 12523
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 54625 (since September 1)

Categories Daily JournalTags Announcements, applying the craft, Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Heinlein's Rules, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Life Happens, Professional Writer Series, The Business Side of Writing, the writing life, writing, Writing Into the Dark1 Comment

The Journal, Thursday, 12/17

December 17, 2015 by Harvey

Hi Folks,

Today is going to be a good day for writing overall, I think. I started by writing two new posts for the Pro Writers' Series over on HarveyStanbrough.com.

The first one will go out this morning. In that one I sent everybody an early Christmas present. Probably you get that one, but if you don't, I urge you to swing by and read A Revised Baker's Dozen.

Oh, and here's a free PDF copy of **The Rise of a Warrior**, Book 1 of the Wes Crowley series. If

you'd rather have it in Kindle (.mobi) or Nook/Apple (.epub) format, you can **Get it free at Smashwords**. No coupon or any of that stuff necessary.

The second post I wrote today is all about setting goals, and it will go out on December 21. It's that time of the month and year when we as writers should be setting up our goals for 2016, yes? That's the focus of that post.

The Day

Rolled out shortly after 3. Again it was far too cold to let the babies out. Hence my nonfiction stuff to begin the day. Between writing and proofing the posts, sipping coffee and checking emails, the first three hours of the day evaporated.

I'm excited about the novel today. What I was writing came to a complete standstill. Then I realized I'm nearing the 1/3 point in the novel. That point is where many novels die.

So why am I excited? Because I know how to get through that 1/3 point and continue writing.

You've all heard me say it before. First, read back a little bit to get back into the flow of the story. Then put your fingers on the keyboard and write the next sentence, whatever comes. Then write the next sentence. Then write the next sentence. Next thing you know, you're not stuck any longer and the novel is moving along fine.

In the case of this particular story, it ground to a halt at the end of a scene. Two women are planning an upcoming dangerous operation. One is worried about this particular op, and the other one is reassuring her. That was the end of the scene.

Now, I don't know what the op is (grin), though I have a pretty good idea. I do know it's against a powerful (and I assume, very bad) man, but I don't know who the man is either, what he does, etc (grin again). That makes me happy because not knowing in advance means I can just write off into the dark and entertain myself.

And that, my friends, is a relaxing thought.

If I knew in advance, I'd be so bored I probably would write something different.

So this time I don't even have to read back. I'll put my fingers on the keyboard, type the first bad-guy name that pops into my head, and then type the rest of the sentence, whatever comes. Then I'll type the next sentence. You know the rest. It's like starting a whole new story. Woohoo!

I grabbed some breakfast. Most often I'm the cook as well as the primary eater. I have a lot of responsibilities like that (grin). But now I'm back. Gonna play with Hal for awhile. Probably later today I'll do a short walk for a break, then back to writing.

A short session, then went out for a short walk. The walk was all right, maybe two miles out and

back in an arroyo, mostly shivering. I think I'm gonna have to give up on the walking for awhile. I walk for my health, but it can't be a workout. It has to be fun. Right now it's as if I'm expending all my energy just trying to stay warm, so it's more work than fun. I don't even take my camera with me anymore.

Anyway, back now. Lunch, then to writing.

Wrote one more short session, but I couldn't really get into it. Writing in general, I mean. The story (the new scene) is going fine.

So I decided to play a little with the Journal website. I changed out the header and did some other small stuff.

Honestly I think the walk put me off my writing stride. I'll get back into it in the morning. I'm planning three sessions before 7 a.m. tomorrow. That should get me going again like I need to. Got a load of laundry almost dry too. Ahh, the joys of touching warm cotton fabric with cold hands.

Today's Writing

Not even close to as well as I had hoped but it will go better tomorrow, barring any major emergencies.

And it was a good day of writing "overall," with over 3700 words total. But just over 1100 of those were fiction, and my daily goal is 4,000 words of publishable fiction. Gotta get myself back on track.

Fiction Words: 1183
Nonfiction Words: 2589

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 40728 (Yesterday's update was 39545)
Total fiction words for the year…… 644719 (Yesterday's update was 643536)

Total nonfiction words for the month… 15112
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 57214 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Harvey Stanbrough, Life Happens, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Friday, 12/18

December 18, 2015 by Harvey

Hi Folks,

I expect a good fiction-writing day today. We'll see. It started with me sipping coffee and fighting allergies. Yep, something's always blooming out here. Plus with the house closed up for winter, the dust tends to recycle.

While setting my goals for the new year, I adjusted my daily goal back down a bit to 3200 words per day. A short while back I raised it from 3,000 to 4,000 per day. I figured since I had exceeded that count a few times I should be able to sustain it.

Uh, no.

I thought about it. Even when my goal was 3,000 per day, I didn't meet it consistently. Yet it wasn't all that difficult either. So I reset my daily goal to 3200 publishable words of fiction per day.

That should make me stretch a bit, yet I should be able to reach it on most days. If I reach it consistently for awhile, I'll raise it again.

Also, when you set your own goals, remember this is a game of averages. You aren't going to consistently hit your goal. If you do, chances are it's too low. When my goal was 3,000 words per day, I exceeded it some days and I goose-egged on some days.

But my AVERAGE over almost any month or longer when I was actually writing came out around 2700 words per day. Not too shabby. Now that I've raised my goal a little to 3200 per day, I'll be interested to see whether that average goes up too.

The Day

Rolled out shortly before 2, a little over 12 hours ago as I write this. Again it was far too cold to let the babies out this morning. I added another 250 words or so to the post I wrote on goals yesterday. Part of that is reflected above.

I got to the writing computer earlier than I thought I would (around 3:30) for a good first session. Then I did some stuff around my office that needed doing, mostly to force myself off the computer for awhile.

Wrote another good session, and then a transition time for an hour or so. I'm alone from whatever time I get up until my wife gets up. Then there's a transition time while she bustles around until she either goes to work (on her workdays) or goes to do things in her office with her sewing or her genealogy projects.

After the transition time, I had another pretty good session, then the post office. Then back here

to open up the house to let some fresh air in. It was only 45 degrees but no wind and I'm in sweats anyway.

Then one more session of writing for today. And now I'm getting tired, so I'm calling it a day for fiction. I'll mess around with websites now.

Oh, by the way, I got an email from Pronoun, that new distributor I told you about earlier. They're asking us to spread the word. Here's part of the email from Christina Bryza (publish@pronoun.com). Of course, I did not count her words in my nonfiction totals.

We … we hope you'll consider giving your friends and fellow writers this special referral link: https://pronoun.com/sign-up/ywp

Anyone who signs up using this link will get immediate access to Pronoun, and we will also give $1 on their behalf to the Young Writers Program, a nonprofit that supports the creativity of kids and teens.

We're committed to shifting the publishing paradigm toward a model that empowers all writers, and we're grateful to you, both for trying out Pronoun for yourself, and for spreading the word to others who can benefit.

Sincerely,
Christina
Director of Author Advocacy, Pronoun

p.s. To make it even easier to share, here are some suggestions:

You can tweet: @Pronoun donates $1 to @NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program when you sign up (for free): pronoun.com/sign-up/ywp
You can tweet: Want to support #youngwriters? @Pronoun will donate $1 to the Young Writers Program when you sign up on pronoun.com/sign-up/ywp #amwriting
You can tweet: Support #youngwriters by signing up on pronoun.com/sign-up/ywp. @Pronoun gives $1 to the Young Writers Program for everyone who joins!

Folks, at the last minute, I thought I'd better take a look at Dean's site to see whether there was anything there I ought to alert you about. Glad I did. Check out his post on **Fighting Critical Voice**. Man is this ever timely!

And while you're there, in that same blog post but before the Topic of the Night, take a look at "An Example of E-Mail I Get." Hilarious. There are some great comments too, barring my own.

By the way, I just realized I had comments off on this site for some posts. I've fixed the problem now. Please feel free to comment on any post.

Today's Writing

Much better than recently. This is what a good writing day should look and feel like.

Fiction Words: 4248
Nonfiction Words: 250 + 620 = 870

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 44976
Total fiction words for the year…… 648967

Total nonfiction words for the month… 15982
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 58084 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Life Happens, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Saturday, 12/19

December 19, 2015 by Harvey

Wow. Two-thirds of the month gone already.

I'm not going to predict what I'll get done in writing today. Striving to meet my daily goal of course, but something just feels "off" today generally. And I can't devote a lot of time to figuring out what that is or I won't get ANY writing done. (grin)

UPDATE: I AM A MORON. If I hadn't devoted a short time to figuring out why writing today was like pulling teeth, I still would have been struggling.

Well yesterday, the first day I adjusted my daily goal back to 3200 words per day, I surpassed it by 1000. Go figure.

Doesn't matter. The purpose of a daily goal, for me, is to serve as a starter. It gets me to the writing computer. After that, it's a matter of how many hours I spend there actually typing.

I did swing by Pronoun to refresh my memory. They distribute to Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, and Google Play. BUT you can't pick and choose. That's the only thing I don't like about it thus far.

Right now, Pronoun has two up sides: They don't take a cut of the royalties like a distributor

should (not sure how long that can last), and they offer distribution to Amazon (so you don't have to put up with distributing stuff to Amazon yourself) and Google Play, which I currently don't have.

That's wonderful for forthcoming titles, but for titles that are already published and placed with different distributors, the author is forced to choose. For me, it's a lot less work and fewer potential problems to leave titles that are already published with the current distributor(s).

The next time I finish a short story I'll distribute it through Pronoun and let you know how it goes. If you have something ready before I do and you try Pronoun, let me know what you think of them.

A Realization

I wrote a session this morning, but it was rough going. Mostly, even though I was writing from my creative mind, I was bored.

That told me something's wrong.

And that made me realize that even yesterday, when I was flying along through four sessions, something didn't feel right. That little voice in the back of my brain housing group was quietly nagging me. Things just didn't feel right.

Okay, between entries in the journal here (always, not just today) I'm thinking back over what I know about writing and about my specific process. Then I'm putting here what I think might help you avoid the same pitfalls, but this also helps me work them out.

I screwed up on the novel. A couple of days ago in this blog I wrote

What I was writing came to a complete standstill. Then I realized I'm nearing the 1/3 point in the novel. That point is where many novels die. So why am I excited? Because I know how to get through that 1/3 point and continue writing.

But I didn't DO what I know how to do. Instead I allowed my critical voice in.

Instead of just continuing to let my subconscious tell the story it had told through over 15,000 words, I got worried about it and "decided" who the bad guy would be.

It's no surprise that the character type I chose was a very safe choice for me. That's what the critical mind does. It gives us safe choices. I can write that character type while standing on my head spitting BBs, plus I like the character type.

That was much safer than simply continuing writing off into the dark. But that character type doesn't necessarily belong in this story, and I knew that from the moment I made the choice. Duh. Those decisions were from my conscious, critical mind. And it went south from there.

Once I decided who the bad guy would be, I decided how and why he came to New Orleans and what he was doing when he got there. All of that stemmed naturally from the character type. And that helped determine what the ladies' "op" would be, etc. All critical mind stuff.

Now understand, I wrote the actual scenes with my subconscious, creative voice, but I started in that direction because my critical mind said I should. I "picked" the character type and a small cast of characters in that type rather than just writing into the dark and allowing my subconscious to reveal the who and what and where.

So now that I've caught myself being stupid, I'm gonna back up to the place where I let my critical mind force the wrong turn and start writing there again.

By the way, putting this stuff down in this journal helped me realize, in part, what I had done. If you guys weren't out there reading this, I might not have caught myself so soon. So thanks again for being there.

The Day

Didn't get up until 3:30 this morning. Answered email, sipped coffee. I have a Keurig and this morning I'm trying the Great Value (Walmart Brand) Breakfast Blend. Shrug. It's just coffee, and about $4 less expensive.

A little over an hour after I got up I moved over to Hal to write a bit. Got one session done, but not the usual number of words I get from a session. Too much starting and stopping. Uncertainty (critical voice). This is where I took a break, checked in with myself, then wrote what you see beneath the Pronoun stuff up there in the first segment.

It's a little after 8 now. I just ate breakfast (sliced turkey melt sandwich). Now I'm gonna get a shower to restart the day, then come back here and write to my goal.

Almost 9:30 before I actually got back to the story. Before I started writing, I cut everything I wrote beyond the women-talking scene. I didn't delete it. I just moved it to the end of this document beyond a "cuts" line. That was around 4600 words.

I wrote it, so the words count (and some of what I wrote will almost certainly end up in at least one short story or another). But there's a 99% chance they won't be in this book when it's complete.

Back at the story, I put my fingers on the keyboard and wrote the opening sentence of a new scene with NO predetermined anything except a man in an office, straightening his tie in a mirror. A half-hour later, I have 617 new words on the page.

That's what happens when you shut down the critical voice and convince the subconscious you trust it again. I have a feeling I'm gonna meet my daily goal today.

Got a great session of around 1200 words, then a short break. Then another session of around a

thousand.

One more good session for today and a WILD character (male) my conscious mind would never have come up with.

I did a little other stuff today too, like adjusting my writing and desk area, etc. But nothing really mattered today but the writing.

Today's Writing

Good day of writing. Good day of decisions and a good day of writing. Had a LOT of distractions today. Unnecessary distractions. Tomorrow I'll try to push the writing early.

Fiction Words: 2969
Nonfiction Words: 1185

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 47945
Total fiction words for the year…… 651936

Total nonfiction words for the month… 17167
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 59269 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags critical mind, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Sunday, 12/20

December 20, 2015 by Harvey

Hi Folks,

It's amazing to me sometimes how all this stuff seems to fit together.

Yesterday I talked about (admitted, really) a serious sort of setback in my current novel and the new life that sprang from that setback.

Then this morning I stopped by Dean's site where, in lieu of a Topic of the Night, he mentioned

there were some good comments over the past few days and that we should read them. I did.

I found one comment in which a woman asked about stopping points and how to get over them and so on.

I answered her question— twice, actually— and then I modified my response for a blog post over on the main site. It will post on January 1. Can't wait to see the comments I get from that post. (grin) Should be fun.

So again, I'm loving how having a problem and then talking about it here seems to slip into a visit to Dean's site and a fellow sufferer and then to a new blog post, which I desperately needed. I still need to write a few more and pre-post them too, to give me a buffer. But I probably won't do that today.

The Day

Rolled out a little after 3 this morning. Answered email, sipped coffee, checked Facebook. Uh, mistake.

Somebody came on my Facebook page and commented from a severe anti-me political standpoint. I had asked her, politely, on more than one occasion not to do that. I eschew labels, but I'm not hard to figure out. I prefer to feed my own family first, I don't think anyone owes me a living, and I take full responsibility for my own life.

Now I am an ardent defender of free speech, no matter how inane I believe some of it is. However, I also understand that freedom of speech does not guarantee an audience.

See, that's why I don't visit other people's Facebook pages to express those views. For another example, I'm also well-mannered enough not to barge into anyone's Kumbaya circle and annoy them with reality.

Anyway, the woman persisted despite several requests that she stop. And I'm just not as patient as I used to be, so I spent some time removing her as an annoyance. You know, figuratively.

I don't doubt that I also added a new character. It's a safe bet that this woman will play a significant role in my next novel. And may I say I'm very glad that Minority Report is not yet a reality. If it were, I'd be posting my next missive from a jail cell.

So after all that I dropped by Dean's site to browse until I got my BP under control again. Then I wrote the blog post I mentioned above, then came here and wrote all this stuff.

Now the first five hours of the day are gone and I've had breakfast, and so to the writing.

Today's Writing

Good enough for today. A lot of nonfiction stuff plus the fiction.

The novel is moving along fine, and that's the main thing. Loving this new character. Most of yesterday and today was just exploring this guy, learning who he is and what he does and why. (For the folks who are new to this Journal, first, welcome! Second, the character told me these things. I didn't tell him.)

Every other paragraph or so he surprised me though, and about half the time that caused me to cycle back a page or two to add a word here or a phrase there.

Turns out he's a city councilman in a large city and he's the wealthiest man in town. What he does is, well, grisly. The why is better left for you to learn and decide on your own later.

This is not a fun guy to be around, but he's a great guy to write.

I got one good session, another partial one. I might come back to the novel later. If I do I'll adjust my numbers. If not, I'll count the rest of today as a day off.

Fiction Words: 1128
Nonfiction Words: 1861

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 49073
Total fiction words for the year…… 653064

Total nonfiction words for the month… 19028
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 61130 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Monday, 12/21

December 21, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

It's Winter Solstice! Tomorrow the days begin getting longer as we move toward the rebirth of the Spring Equinox. Woohoo!

Well, I spent a rough night, ill and very little sleep, but it was my own stupid fault. Ate the wrong food (wonderful for the mouth, terror in the gut) in the form of mini-tacos. Long story short, I didn't realize one of the ingredients was chili powder. I'm allergic. Severely.

So stomach, lungs, sinuses, headache, fever, chills… they all got together and had a rave. That's what they call those crazy overnight parties, right? A rave? That's what they did. Shrug. The day will be what it's gonna be.

Seriously, outside the midwest (bless their hearts) who makes Mexican food with chili powder? NO! What you're looking for is cumin!

Anyway, as a result, I'm taking it easy today. I'll write, but in a more relaxed way than usual. By that I mean I'll write awhile, then just go do something else, even if the something else is television. Then I'll come back and write awhile again. Lather, rinse, repeat. I'll be interested to see how this turns out.

Definitely nothing very physical today. And no nonfiction writing other that this post unless something really rears up and yells at me to write it. But I want this day to be all about fiction.

I was going to try to document major parts of my day below, but it didn't turn out that way. I try to keep this Journal evolving to make it more useful to you. I get to keep my numbers and chat with my friends, so it's already useful for me.

If you have any ideas in that regard, anything you'd like to see regularly or more often or at all, please let me know. It'll give me a way to "give back" to you. Yeah, for puttin; up with all this crap in the first place, eh? (Sorry, my character Nick snuck in when I wasn't looking.)

The Day

Rolled out a little before 3 this morning thanks to urging from my kit, who got a good night's sleep. Answered email, sipped coffee, read a couple of news things I get. (I don't watch local or national television news. I'm just not that wild about propaganda. Check it out. I regularly visit the President of Russia's website, yet I'll leave the room if local or national news is on in this country.)

Also played a few games of spider solitaire, so maybe a half-hour total on that. Then I came here and wrote all the stuff above. So all in all, about two and a half hours of the day were gone when I turned to the writing 'puter.

After the first writing session, which was more of a cycling-back session, I went in and sat on the couch for awhile with Odd Type Writers, a strange but fun little paperback I ordered from Amazon. It reputes to report correctly the "obsessive habits and quirky techniques of great authors."

What it actually reports are what professional fiction writers SAID were their obsessive habits and quirky techniques, etc. Always take that stuff with a grain of salt, folks. I mean, think about

it. Professional fiction writers make stuff up for a living. The one "quirky" thing most of them share is a twisted sense of humor.

They will tell people (compilers, aspiring writers, editors, publishers, readers) all sorts of strange things just to see what the aforementioned people will buy. Then they'll get together with other professional writers and laugh at what they were able to put over on people while maintaining a straight face.

Consider for a moment how many people believe Hemingway always wrote drunk while standing up in his underwear so he could get in touch with his male essence or some such nonsense. And that's about as good as believing Stephen King when he said he writes the way he does because he has the heart of a small boy— and he keeps it in a jar on his desk.

Same kind of tall tale, one readily believed with almost religious conviction and the other not believed at all. (Though you might keep a closer eye on Mr. King at parties afterward, amiright?)

Anyway, reading this book is still fun. I'm coming up with a few doozies of my own. Heh.

Got my Popular Science magazine today. I keep those for my SF stories. And for ideas for SF stories. And ideas for science fantasies. You can write excellent fantasy stories about stuff that actually exists because 1) the fact that it DOES exist can give it a lot more depth in your story BUT 2) most people don't know it exists so you can do really odd stuff with some of it.

I also take Archaeology, and not just 'cause I'm old. It's great for locations and it's great for general factoids. And story ideas.

Ate a very light lunch. Just enough to stop my gut from making excess acid. I know people who actually forget to eat. Seriously. MAN I wish I could master that art. Anbody know a course or a trick? I'll pay. Seriously.

Today's Writing

First, frankly this could easily have been a day off. This is one of those days when I got up and thought, "Okay, if I had a job in a cubicle somewhere or as a beef inspector or whatever, would I still go to work today?"

The answer was yes.

So I decided I should go to work today.

A work ethic is a work ethic, no matter the job, right?

Cycled back during the first session (for about an hour) and added about 400 new words to more thoroughly ground the reader in an important scene. Took a break to Just Sit (still healing) and read a bit in the book I mentioned above.

Wrote for a short second session, around a half-hour for about 600 words. Took another break just to drop by the PO. Got my Popular Science mag.

Extended the break for lunch and to go play a bit with my main website. More to do over there, but no rush.

Finally had a good writing session at about 3 p.m. First time all day I was able to sit at the 'puter for longer than about a half-hour. Tomorrow is going to be SO much better.

Okay, so I ended up with "only" a little over 2000 words, but I guarantee you, today I'll take it. As I wrote above, this could very easily have been a heck-with-it-I'll-write-tomorrow-maybe day. And those, my friends, are dangerous.

Fiction Words: 2097
Nonfiction Words: 950

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 51170
Total fiction words for the year…… 655161

Total nonfiction words for the month… 19978
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 62080 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Harvey Stanbrough, Life Happens, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Tuesday, 12/22

December 22, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Pretty good post over at Dean's place today. When he said a day or two ago that outlines are always written in critical voice, from the critical, conscious mind, someone commented, saying that was a blanket statement and that outlines work well for a lot of writers.

Huh? Okay, so the guy was comparing apples and Toyotas.

Dean didn't say outlines never work for any writers ever. He just said outlines are always written from the consicous, critical mind. I was left wondering how a WRITER could be dense enough to NOT understand that how an outline is written and whether some writers might find them useful are two distinctly different things.

The fact is, ALL outlines are written with the critical, conscious mind. That's just a fact. You can't write an outline with your creative subconscious, and if you could, what would be the point?

An outline isn't a complete thing. It isn't a story or a novel. It's a road map from Point A to B to C and so on. You have to think your way across it consciously, putting in points as you go. Therefore, it is written with the critical, conscious mind.

Now, can you write FROM an outline and write your story off into the dark? Yes. Of course. And when you do, if the story veers away from the outline, and if you're smart, you'll go back and revise the outline, not the story.

I used a very sketchy, thin road map for two of the Crowley novels. The second and third ones, for some reason (the ones that ended up being 5 and 6 in the overall series). Just to give me an idea of where the characters were going when, all that. I doubt I'll ever use one again.

The Day

Rolled out a little after 2 this morning with a full night's sleep in only two sessions. I hate that I have to sleep at all. But feeling rested at the beginning of a day is primo. Still a little ill today, kind'a queasy, but a ton better than yesterday.

Answered email and was drawn to Facebook for a little while. There I responded to a person who asked me to enlighten her regarding who Ambassador Stevens was. She had never heard of him. This woman isn't a millennial. She's my age.

Oh well. It is part of the insane nature of my first career that in defending the rights of my fellow citizens, I somehow empowered them to negate both those rights and that defense.

Yawn. Buddies, if I had known back then what I know now, both about the mentality of the citizenry and writing, I'd have been writing straight through from the time I was about 12. Then again, if reincarnation exists, at least I already have a plan. (grin)

Anyway, after the email and stuff I came here and wrote some of this stuff. Not quite an hour of the day gone, just starting my second mugga coffee, and I'm turning to Hal, the writing computer. Expecting a great day of writing today.

Got a session done, at first cycling back again like I did yesterday. Added about 300 new words. Then a break for herding cats and then looking at some silly memes I saved from various places

on the Internet.

Another session, right at 900 words, and then a break for breakfast. While I ate, I played a couple of games of spider solitaire at my desk.

Extended the break and worked on my main website a bit. Mostly I'm adding a page with links to my novels and collections over on the publisher website.

Another session, just under an hour for almost a thousand words. Writing's going well today. I don't think it's going to be a "great" day like I had hoped, but I still suspect it will be a good one.

Another sort-of break to work on the main site. I added a photo-link to the publisher site in the left sidebar and revised the books2read link. (When you click the books2read link my distributor D2D puts your name on a list and you receive an email whenever I release anything new through them.)

Had to create the links and experiment with colors and sizes etc. so that cost a couple hours, which was a good hour longer than I planned. Gonna head outside for a little while, get some air, stretch my legs, then back for another session of writing.

Another session for a little over another thousand words and I'm calling it for the day.

Today's Writing

As you see above, three pretty good sessions of around an hour each plus the abbreviated first session this morning. I think once I get used to this write/break/write sequence and can make the breaks last, I'll be able to increase my daily goal. It seems a lot easier to write when I'm relaxed.

Fiction Words: 3414
Nonfiction Words: 800

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 54584
Total fiction words for the year…… 658575

Total nonfiction words for the month… 20778
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 62880 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, writing, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Wednesday, 12/23

December 23, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

From the Before I Forget department, I'm planning two or three days off in early January. My buddy Dan (Hey, Dan!) and I are gonna head out and do some winter camping, probably out in the Lower Gila Box wilderness again. It'll be interesting to see the place in the middle of winter. Cold but interesting. And you can't take a bad picture there.

It's also gonna be a mini-writers' conference. Dan and I are both professional writers, and we've already about oohed and aahed the place pretty much to sleep, so I suspect we're gonna talk a LOT of writing this time. When we aren't exploring the crevices and ravines and arroyos and flats and hills.

Anyway, keeping this journal going every day has become another goal. I have a pretty good streak started so I'll pre-post placeholders for those days I'm gone. I'll come up with something good to put in there between now and then. (grin)

Back to Dean's site to check for more comments on "all outlines are written with the conscious mind." To date, my favorite self-flagellating response was this one:

an outline IS CREATIVE [emphasis original] voice. … I'm locked thoroughly in creative mind when making outlines.

… [O]utlining … allows you 1) to CONSCIOUSLY CONTROL the theme of the story, and 2) to CONSCIOUSLY CONTROL the character arcs that illustrate that theme [my emphasis added in this paragraph].

… [F]or those of us with more targeted purposes for our art, starting with an outline … is imperative.

I mean, I've never seen a guy beat up his own point that quickly or that succinctly. (grin) I added a comment on the site, but I'm pretty sure I don't have to comment further here.

Okay, I came back to add This Link because there are about 28 comments there now and some great arguments on opposing viewpoints. I urge you all to take a look. It's a learning opportunity, I think.

The Day

Rolled out a little after 2 again this morning. Very little email. I spent about 40 minutes writing an introductory sort-of topic above, but it didn't feel right so I deleted it.

I was about to begin writing fiction but some nonfiction stuff caught my attention so I returned to it. I think it's going to end up over on the big blog later.

Anyway, with two hours of the day gone (so I didn't lose as much time as I thought), it's time to write fiction.

In lieu of making and eating breakfast, I opened a tube of saltine crackers and nibbled on them as I wrote. Got three short sessions done, mostly cycling back through the last couple of days, trimming here and adding there. Ended up adding a little over 1000 new words. As I was doing that, there were a few breaks.

The longest break was one during which I rescued a packrat from the other cat. All of this took place underneath the dining room table (so chair legs, etc. in the way) and eventually I got it safely out of the house. The packrat, not the dining room table. Or the cat.

The struggle must've been comical from the outside. I kept shuffling forward, left, right on my knees, occasionally swinging a small cardboard trap box at the packrat. Now packrats are like the knight in a chess set. They can move a bjillion different ways, vertically and horizontally, in a split second and land three squares away.

Especially this packrat. He was having none of cardboard trab box. He kept escaping me by running to the cat, who generally did nothing but licked her lips and waited. Cats are very patient, especially when they have a human herding for them.

Each time the packrat ran toward the cat, I yelled her name (Hannah) to get her to back off, which she did, a few inches. Until she thought, in her little cat mind, I wasn't paying attention.

Then she'd creep forward, I'd adjust and swing the box at the packrat, and it would race headlong for suicide by cat.

But eventually (after about six iterations), I got enough chair legs outta the way. The packrat was about halfway between me and Hannah. Having expended most of my other options and not wanting to shoot up my saltillo tile floor with my 9mm, I started talking softly to the packrat (yeah, I know). Incredibly the thing stayed right where it was as I and my hovering hand and the box crept closer.

Finally, right in the middle of an almost-whispered sentence, I caught the little guy, slid a cover beneath the box, and transported his little brown self outside.

I am The Packrat Whisperer. Coming to a theater near you.

Somewhere around 11 a.m. a nonfiction idea for a blog post occurred, so I moved over to my other computer and wrote that, then pre-posted it for January 11. Then a brief break and then

back to the novel

Wow. I hit another thousand words in a little less than an hour, and it seemed more like ten minutes. I love it when scenes fly like that. My subconscious must've had that one queued up.

I took a short break to set some tea out to steep, then came back and hit it for another thousand words. And my characters AND the storyline have completely surprised me three or four times in those last 2000 words.

Plus it's not 2 p.m. yet. Seriously, folks, if I ever forget to just write off into the dark on a novel again, I hope someone comes along and clocks me alongside the head.

Okay, one more good session. I'm calling it a day with a little over 4,000 words and it's not quite 3 p.m. That gives me time to finish this up, fill out the spreadsheet, and post this to the website.

Thanks for coming along today.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 4072
Nonfiction Words: 2220

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
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Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 58656
Total fiction words for the year…… 662647

Total nonfiction words for the month… 22998
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 65100 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark

The Journal, Thursday, 12/24

December 24, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Beginning tomorrow, I'm going to do a Topic of the Day again. All topics will be of interest to writers, and to aspirants who want to be successful writers. In other words, it will be of interest to those who want to continue learning. I suggest you scroll down to glance over the topic each day before you hit the Delete key.

Today, in the place where the Topic of the Day will be starting tomorrow, you will find "The Journal Is Changing." It's the How and Why I'm changing this journal. I hope you will read it.

Finally, it's Christmas Eve. I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas filled with the joys of the season. May you all enjoy a healthy, happy and prosperous new year. And for goodness' sake, may it also be filled with just enough frowns so we don't all feel like idiots, walking around grinning all the time. (grin)

Of Interest

Today in Dean Wesley Smith's blog he tossed in a few quotes from Stephen King regarding outlining.

If you haven't read them yet, I also highly recommend his books on Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing, all of which are available free in chapter form on his website here: http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/killing-the-sacred-cows-of-publishing/. These things are gold, folks. In order, the books are

- Killing the Top Ten Sacred Cows of Publishing
- Killing the Top Ten Sacred Cows of Indie Publishing
- Killing Even More Sacred Cows of Indie Publishing

Finally, in case you're interested, here are Mark Coker's (Smashwords) 2016 Book Publishing Industry Predictions.

Topic of the Day: The Journal Is Changing

Hmmm. Am I being too wordy? Am I putting in too much nonsense (The Saga of the Packrat Whisperer)? Are my sentences too long and convoluted? (That's been a problem in the past.)

I think I need to refocus. Most things change, and this journal is no different. Please be patient for a moment as I think this through. I'll start at the beginning.

This is a journal, a diary. It helps me stay on track with my own writing. It is also something I want to share.

In it, I record my writing process, the writing itself, and life things that interrupt the writing

process.

I also record any tricks of the trade that I develop along the way or pick up from other successful professional writers via books, blogs, etc.

After a lifetime (61 years) of calling myself a writer, I finally stumbled across the basketful of golden rules that enabled me to actually BE one. That was in early 2014, so not quite two short years ago. Before that, some of my work had been nominated for several presgitious awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. But I wasn't a writer.

Depending on which part of my life you were looking at, I was Something Else who wrote every now and then.

At various times I was an oilfield laborer, a dishwasher, a short-order cook, an enlisted Marine (rifleman, machine gunner, light anti-tank assaultman, HAWK missile system operator, recruiter), a law enforcement officer, a landscaping laborer, a hired editor (MacMillan Computer Publishing, now Pearson Education), a high school janitor, a freelance copyeditor, a conference speaker and a writing instructor.

But again, I wasn't a writer. I was Something Else who wrote occasionally. I talked a lot about writing, I thought about writing and I even taught writing, but I didn't write much at all.

Then in February 2014 I stumbled across Heinlein's Rules.

Thank god I was smart enough not to dismiss them out of hand as a trick used by science fiction writers. Thank god I was smart enough to try them for myself to see whether they would really work. And thank god I'm a Type AAA personality with a stubborn streak the size of Texas. I am now a Heinlein's Rules adherent.

Then part two hit: In April 2014 I found Writing Off Into the Dark. In a world in which almost nothing is perfect, the fit of Writing Off Into the Dark with Heinlein's Rules was perfect. I sat down at the keyboard and I've never looked back.

This journal was born just before I started writing my first novel. I went public with it for two reasons:

1. As an old jarhead, frankly, I need a place to report, a place to hold myself accountable. This journal is that place.
2. I wanted to give others the chance to experience what I have experienced since early 2014.

But people won't read it if it isn't interesting *To Them*. Duh. And so these changes.

From now on the first section will introduce the Topic of the Day or indicate that there is no topic for that day. That way those who come only for the topic will see up front whether to keep reading or hit the Delete key. I don't have a problem with that.

If the first section is longer than one paragraph, the rest will contain other introductory information that I think you might find useful. Either way, the first section will be very brief.

The second section will contain items Of Interest. These will be links to other sources that I have already vetted, usually websites or books. The second section also will be very brief.

The third section will contain the actual Topic of the Day. Knowing me, it will not be brief, but it will be informative and useful.

The fourth section will contain The Day and then the numbers. That will continue much as it's been in the past. If anything in the journal perhaps ought to be private, it's this stuff.

But it's out there, clean and dirty laundry mixed. It's flapping in the sunshine, drying on tight lines strung between T posts in my virtual back yard.

My private intention with The Day is to remind myself of what worked and what didn't. Some other writers will find that of value. Some won't. That's fine.

My private intention with the numbers is to hold myself accountable. My public intention is to encourage others and let them see what is possible.

So there you go. The new journal. I hope you enjoy it. If you find it useful, please tell your friends.

The Day

Rolled out a little before 3 this morning. There was almost no email (yay) so I came straight here, actually, and wrote all the stuff above this section. This is the first time in awhile that I felt a stronger compulsion to write nonfiction (this post) than fiction. I'll get to the fiction in a bit.

I also added a new, very brief post over at the other website. Mostly that was to invite others to this post.

Okay, between writing this post and the other one, checking Dean's site and the Smashwords blog and eating a quick breakfast, four hours of the morning are gone. Then I grabbed a quick shower a little after 7 a.m. Now, finally, I'm turning to the writing computer, Hal. (I felt compelled to name him since he is complicit in my writing. Not kidding.)

Okay, did some more cycling back, adding a little over 1300 new words. And had another new experience.

Some of the scenes in this book lend themselves to other genres. And I've already bought into the idea of writing some things in the other genre too, so this morning I've been writing two different genres simultaneously, switching from one to the other. Plainly put, I have to stop that. If I don't, I'll still be writing this thing a month from now.

So a break here. When I go back, I'll shut off the other genre completely and work only on this one. For one thing, this one is a novel and the other will be a short story or novella at the most. So this has to take precedence. I just have to get out of this one extended scene and switch to see what some of the other characters are up to.

Well, I stayed with the same characters. They weren't ready to leave the stage yet as it turned out, but they told me a lot more of their story. More revealing stuff about the bad guy (stuff I didn't know) and some extra about the other character as well.

Got a couple more good sessions and stopped at a really jagged edge. So overall, a good day.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 3206
Nonfiction Words: 2350

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 61862
Total fiction words for the year…… 665853

Total nonfiction words for the month… 25348
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 67450 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Announcements, Continuing Education, Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Heinlein's Rules, Learning, Professional Writer Series, writing, Writing Into the Dark Leave a comment

The Journal, Friday, 12/25

December 25, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Merry Christmas to you and yours. I hope it's everything you want it to be. The Topic of the Day today will be "A Brief Musing." So not a major thing.

I received a great gift this year. On opening my email this morning, I found one with the subject "out of the past." The sender was a man I first met in a barracks at MCAS Yuma in 1971. I gotta tell you if you don't already know, being reunited with someone you met 45 years ago and have always considered a close friend ranks right up there. A very merry Christmas indeed.

Of Interest

I know many of you are at least interested in creating your own ebook covers and possibly doing other design projects. Here are 12 Free Ways to Learn Design that you might find of interest. If you haven't heard of Creative Market before, it's also a great place (sometimes) to find unique fonts and other design elements.

Also from the In Case You're Interested department, I recommend visiting Open Culture. Visit the narrow sidebar just to the right of the main column. I use this site for research but have also downloaded free textbooks on things that I've always wanted to learn. My current passion in that regard is Physics.

Topic of the Day: A Brief Musing

Originally I was going to write a bit about Persistence here. But I thought maybe that was a bit tacky on Christmas day, a day that most people consider an automatic day off.

I'm glad this day exists, and I'm glad it means to you (ya'll an' all'ya'll) whatever it means to you personally. I'm pretty sure that's mostly what the day is about. You know. Faith. Hope. Charity. That stuff.

Personally, I wouldn't rather be doing anything than writing on my novel. And I will, as much as I am reasonably able to without putting out or off other people. I think that's what it's about too.

So I will adjust my schedule a bit and spend part of the day, happily, doing things other people prefer me to do. And that's fine.

When 2 or 3 a.m. tomorrow rolls around, I would prefer above all else to have spent this day, like any other, reasonably healthy, reasonably happy, and pretty sure my friends and relatives spent it the same way.

Everything else, even the word count, is pure gravy.

The Day

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. My intention was to go straight to the novel and start writing with only a quick side trip for coffee and then a cursory check of email.

But I found Frank's email. And even though I haven't seen or heard from him in well over 40 years, I just couldn't set his email aside to answer later. Isn't that odd?

Anyway, with my response and a minor electronic Christmas gift sent, and with this journal entry started, I'm getting to the novel. It's almost 3 already. Sheesh.

It's 5 a.m. now. I have a little over 1600 new words on the day. That was two very short writing sessions of 15 and 25 minutes with a brief break in between. Then another short break for crackers and peanut butter, and then a more normal session of just under an hour.

The world will be waking up soon and I'll move into everyone else's Christmas Day mode for awhile. So for the rest of this day, I'll just call it a day off and get back on it tomorrow. (grin)

Oh, one other priority— sometime today or this evening I'll sit back and watch Albert Finney's musical version of Scrooge. Great, great flick. Besides, can you really go wrong when you watch a movie in which the main character uses a line straight from Elvis? "Thank you very much." (grin)

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 1614
Nonfiction Words: 600

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words

Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 63476
Total fiction words for the year…… 667467

Total nonfiction words for the month… 25948
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 68050 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Harvey Stanbrough, Life Happens, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark Leave a comment

The Journal, Saturday, 12/26

December 26, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Well, there you have it. Only 365 days 'til Christmas. Do you have your goals set for 2016 yet? In the Topic below, I'll talk briefly (again) about setting goals. I don't feel like I'm over-reaching here. There was a time when I needed an extra push. If any of you are in that same mindset, maybe today's post will be what you need.

My personal plan today is to get to my daily goal as soon as I can. Then I plan to take part of the day to listen to another classic workshop I signed up for awhile back. I actually forgot I had it. It's called Genre Structure. If the novel I'm currently writing keeps twisting and turning, I might need to review this classic workshop just to figure out how to label the novel. (grin)

Of Interest

Check out Dean's blog if you have time. I suggest keying "What Works" into your Edit > Find dialogue. That will take you straight past the daily stuff to the topic of the night. Pretty good topic. I recommend reading it two or three times, especially the last third or so.

Topic of the Day: A Little More on Setting Goals

I've always been mindful in my own life that a new time period (minute, hour, day, week, month, year) begins with every tick of the clock. Time is only a man-made device to mark our passage here anyway.

Still, for it to be useful at all, time must be measured against something. The three more common measurements are distance from birth, distance to a significant event (have to be at work by 9 a.m., vacation starts in 4 days), or an accomplishment before a certain time or during a certain period of time.

I'm fortunate with regard to those three measurements.

- I don't care at all about the first. In fact, knowing how long I have left would be far more useful than knowing how long I've been here. Duh.
- The second hasn't factored into my life for several years. I don't wear a watch. I consider it a slave bracelet. When I wore a watch, getting somewhere seemed to take precedence over being somewhere. Gracias, pero no.
- But that third one, that's my enabler. That's what drives me to set goals and strive to attain them.

My personal goals are numbers-based, but I know that isn't the case for everyone. That's all

right. You can still set goals.

- Consider writing a unit (one event from your memoir, one scene or chapter of your novel) every day.
- Need to practice coming up with ideas? Set your mind to come up with at least one idea every day (a character with a problem in a setting). Don't be silly about it. Be serious.
- Write an opening (usually 300 to 500 words) from that idea. If it keeps going, go with it.
- Write a short story every day. (Hey, Bradbury did it before he was Bradbury. DWS did it for a month.)
- Write a short story every week. (Again, a recommendation from Bradbury.)
- Write three openings every week. Again, if one runs with you, go with it.
- Got a great series character? (Umm, Gary, talkin' to you here.) Give him his head and write another novel already.

What goals have YOU set for the upcoming days? Weeks? Months? Comment below. The rest of us might find your goals useful to us as well.

Beginning January 1, my goals are as follows (repeated, sort of, from the 12/21 post on the main site):

- Daily
  - 3,200 new publishable words of fiction, plus whatever nonfiction (blog posts, articles)
  - at least 500 words of publishable words of fiction *every day* (Going for a streak here. Even if I miss my daily goal, the 500 words will keep the streak alive.)
- Weekly
  - at least one new short story every week
- Monthly
  - one new novel per month
- Annual
  - 12 novels (some I hope in series)
  - 52 short stories (at least one in every major genre except probably mystery)
  - at least 1,000,000 publishable words of fiction (Not as hard as it sounds. If I meet my daily goal for 313 days I'll exceed this goal.)

The Day

Rolled out a little before 1 this morning. Very little email, as you might imagine with yesterday being Christmas.

By around 1:30 I was cycling back over about the last 2000 words. I added around 200 words (some description, a little dialogue) and moved about that many words to the "cuts" section at the end of the document. Just cleaning up a little.

Went for my second mug, this time Kava (acid free) and a separate mug of agua dulce. I think maybe I'm a little dehydrated from all the caffeine. Then I came here to write everything you see above.

I'm liking this new journal format. It isn't so scattered, and the less important stuff (for others) is

down here at the end. I can start at the top and write straight down. If I add anything later, it will be in the Of Interest section.

Hoping to hear from my old buddy Frank this morning. Lately I think gmail has been losing some of my mail, both outgoing and incoming. That's truly annoying. So just FYI, I'm also keeping my Yahoo account open for awhile longer just in case.

As it turned out, I zonked out early and didn't get to watch Albert Finney's musical version of Scrooge. Maybe later today. Great movie.

Okay, now it's somehow it's already 4 a.m. Back to the novel. Added another 1300 words in two sessions of about 40 minutes each.

Ate breakfast, grabbed a shower and back to the novel. It's almost 8:30 already. Sheesh.

Got a few more short sessions finished. I missed my daily goal by 44 words, but I guess I'll take it. Looking forward to listening to Dean talk about Genres.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 3166
Nonfiction Words: 1000

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
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Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words
Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words
Day 13… 3166 words. Total words to date…… 41879 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 66642
Total fiction words for the year…… 670633

Total nonfiction words for the month… 26948
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 69050 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, Setting Goals, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark Leave a comment\

The Journal, Sunday, 12/27

December 27, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

In the Topic below, I'll talk briefly about Writers and Learning, mostly about my own recent experience, and then some recommendations. Eventually this will become a longer post over on the other site. I'm doing it here first because I often forget to take time to advance my knowledge of the craft. That leads me to suspect (or maybe hope) other writers do so as well.

I listened to the entire Genre Structure workshop yesterday. That's about 5 hours I'll never get back. I was sorely disappointed in this particular classic workshop, and I do not recommend it for writers who are advanced beyond junior high school.

Each week contains 5 or 6 videos, and there are 6 weeks. Because it's a classic (retired at half-price) workshop, you can view/listen to all the videos whenever you like.

In the first week, he explained why knowing genre is important: so your book gets on the right digital or physical bookshelf in stores. Duh.

Over the next four weeks, he listed and relisted the various genres and subgenres. (If you don't know the genres, stand in the fiction section of a bookstore and read all the little tabs on the front of the shelves.) And he listed the major components of each genre: Character, Setting, Plot, Character Voice, and Style.

Finally, in the sixth week there were a few gems, but gems that I already knew. I don't feel that I'm breaking a trust by passing them on to you. I will do so in the Topic below.

Of Interest

I take a newsletter (comes out roughly once a week) from Dr. Mardy, a verbivore of the first order. In it he lists interesting information and quotations. To subscribe (it's free), send a blank email to drmardy-on@mail-list.com.

In today's "This Week in History," he talks about Isaac Asimov, among the most prolific and great writers of all times with almost 500 books on pretty much every topic. Harlan Ellison once said of Asimov, "He had writer's block once. It was the worst ten minutes of his life." Is that a great quote or what?

One of Asimov's many quotes is appropriate to today's topic: "The day you stop learning is the day you begin decaying."

Here are a couple more I particularly like:

If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster."

"It has always been my ambition to die in harness with my head face-down on a keyboard and my nose caught between two of the keys."

"There is a cult of ignorance in the United States, and there always has been… [It is] nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that 'my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.'"

Topic of the Day: Writers and Learning

This topic sprang in part from my (first ever bad) experience with a workshop by Dean Wesley Smith. So at least something good came out of it.

I could have titled this topic just "Learning," but writers have a penchant for going about it all wrong. Let me explain with a pair of questions.

If you were a rookie anything (cop, doctor, sculptor, painter [art or houses], musician, lawyer, plumber, carpenter, electrician, etc.), which makes more sense:

1. To actively seek advice from other rookies?
2. To seek advice from someone who has been doing the job successfully for awhile?

Just answer it for yourself. Then carry it over to your writing.

Now, if you're in a critique group or writers' group (or writers' organization) primarily for the social aspect, that's fine. Rookies in all fields of endeavor are known to hang out together too. They'll even talk shop. But the smarter ones still don't seek or take advice from each other.

In a nutshell, here's what I want to pass along to you about learning:

Never stop learning about writing. But learn what has worked for successful writers in your genre(s). When writers begin spouting the same old tired platitudes in my general vicinity, my brain shuts down.

Buy "how to write" books edited or written by writers who have been successful in your genre(s). Study them. Take from those books only what feels right to you and discard the rest. It's the least expensive good education you can get.

After you've read a novel for pleasure and it blows you away in some way (couldn't put it down, etc.), go back and study it. How did the writer hold you? Did he use all five sense in describing the setting? What were his sentence structures like? His paragraphing? Did he use cliffhangers at the ends of scenes and/or chapters? How was it related to the hook in the beginning of the next one? And so on.

Don't hover. Ever hear of artists in other fields of endeavor going back over the same piece several times trying to "perfect" it, by which they mean "make it look like everyone elses"? Uh,

no. They learn new stuff, move on to the next painting or sculpture or short story or novel and apply what they've learned there.

Practice. You can't be a writer if you don't write. And you can't improve your craft if you don't write.

The Day

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Very little email again.

Spurred-on by Dr. Mardy's newletter and the bit about Asimov, I searched online for a free copy of his short story "Nightfall." I wanted a copy in Word so I could study it. (It was published in 1941. Decades later it was voted by his peers the best SF short story ever written). I have it now, in Word. If you would like a copy, email me or comment below and ask. I'd be happy to send it to you.

You can find many older stories free online. This one was no exception. Finding and formatting the story took well over an hour. Then I came directly to this journal and wrote everything above. Now, finally, I'm moving over to the novel.

I don't feel a sense of urgency at all in writing this one, other than wanting to finish it. It's flowing along so well that I've been jumping right back into it day after day with no struggles, no problems.

I just have to remind myself now and then that it doesn't matter whether it's a novella or a novel or what. It also doesn't matter that I don't know where it's going. All that matters is telling a good story and writing the next sentence, whatever comes.

As has become my habit with this book, I started by cycling back through the previous chapter. I added about 600 words and also added a couple of sentences toward the beginning of the book. When I'm writing off into the dark, occasionally the characters take a turn that requires a minor change earlier in the manuscript. For example, if a character suddenly shoots someone with a pistol he pulled out of a nightstand drawer, you'll have to cycle back to some earlier point in the story and plant the pistol. This is all done in creative voice with the subconscious mind.

Any time I cycle back (unless I cycle WAY back for a specific purpose like planting that pistol), I usually read forward from there and allow myself to touch the story as I go. Again, though, this is all in creative voice. I don't add in anything that doesn't spring live straight out of the current POV character.

Took a break and was gonna spend maybe up to a half-hour or so looking for a few How-Tos I want to buy. I found them on Amazon, then remembered there's a pretty good used book store about 10 miles from here in Benson. So I printed out a list. If I can get them there it'll save me shipping charges, and if not I'll order them tomorrow afternoon. Anyway, my half-hour break turned into an hour and a half. Back to the novel.

Two more good sessions, and then several small mini-sessions during breaks and half-time periods in football games I was interested in. (grin) Not kidding. At times I dropped a hundred words on the page during a long commercial break. Fun.

Anyway, I met my goal today and I could easily do more, but two of my favorite teams are playing right now (Green Bay at my Cardinals) so I'm gonna take part of the day off.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 3318
Nonfiction Words: 1300

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words
Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words
Day 13… 3166 words. Total words to date…… 41879 words
Day 14… 3318 words. Total words to date…… 45197 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 69960
Total fiction words for the year…… 673951

Total nonfiction words for the month… 28248
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 70350 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Continuing Education, Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, writing, Writing Into the Dark 4 Comments

The Journal, Monday, 12/28

December 28, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

In the Topic below, I'll talk a little more about Ongoing Learning.

I could maybe talk about persistence too, or something. Or just how Returning to the Keyboard is all you really have to do to be a writer.

As you'll see below, during some of my usual primo writing hours, I chose to be elsewhere doing other things. Valuable, important things, for sure, but still other things than writing.

At one point I came very close to just calling it a day (that was around 1 p.m. when I had around 1200 words on the day).

As it turned out, I returned to the keyboard. I had some more cycling back to do because something happened in the book earlier today that necessitated a change in the very first chapter. So I cycled back there and started reading forward, touching the story as I went.

Again, this isn't rewriting or anything at all to do with the conscious mind. This is all subconscious, creative mind stuff. And a ton of fun.

Of Interest

Nada to report today except one more quote from Asimov, brought to my attention by Gary Vineyard in a comment on yesterday's Journal entry:

"THE NEUTRINO HUNTERS, my current read, begins with an Asimov quote. "The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' (I've found it!), but 'Hmm. That's funny….'"

Perfect. Yes?

Topic of the Day: Ongoing Learning

Now, I already know a lot about some of these topics. I don't plan to read these books, absorb and take for gospel everything the authors lay out, and all that.

On the other hand, it never hurts to get a bit of different knowledge from someone who's been in the business for a long time and has written and sold a lot of titles in the genre. So that's my basis. I'll mine these books, look for "aha" moments, and extract what works for me. Then I'll probably pass them along.

So here are the books I bought, followed by the publisher and year and the usually minuscule price I paid. I followed that with what I hope to get out of the book. Only one was on my original list, and there was an earlier version of one that's on my list:

How to Write Action Adventure Novels by Michael Newton (WD, 1989, on my list) $5 I probably will read most of this one, but especially the sections on The Hook, Pacing, and Tension and Suspense.

Mystery Writer's Handbook Ed. by Lawrence Treat (WD, 1976, on my list, but I want also to

get the newer version edited by Sue Grafton) $3 I probably will read all of this one. It's a collection of essays on the genre from long-time authors in the genre.

Building Believable Characters by Marc McCutcheon (WD, 1996) $3 I bought this one mostly for the descriptions, adjectives and definitions in it. For example, you can find the names of different types of dresses on page 192. Facial Expressions are from page 157 to 191. Great reference work.

Conflict, Action & Suspense by William Noble (WD, 1994) $3 Bought it for the title. Duh. It offers ways to build suspense through Setting, Character Development, Dialogue, Openings, and POV. Also has what looks to be a great section on Pacing, one of my favorite components of storytelling.

Setting by Jack M. Bickham (WD, 1993) $3 I bought this one because when I first glanced at it I thought 'I don't need that. I already know that.' Now I'm gonna see what Mr. Bickham knows that I only thought I knew. I'll read this one selectively.

Writing Horror by Edo van Belkom (Self-Counsel Press, 2000) $19.95 (Yep, full price new for this one. That's okay, given what I paid for the others.) I'll read this one selectively. I'm not at all interested in slash and gash stuff, but am very much into psychological suspense, so we'll see how this one goes.

And this one isn't a separate "how-to" book but a curiosity that should be a blast to read. **Ellery Queen's Book of First Appearances** (The Dial Press, 1982) $4 It's a compilation of 27 short stories by then-beginning now-accomplished authors. I thought it would be fun to read, and probably I'll end up enamoured with some of the stories enough to study them.

So including the full-priced one, I dropped just under $41 for these 7 books (or $37 for the six how-to books). For the how-to books, that's only about $6 each. Not bad for a masters-level education.

The Day

Rolled out right at 2 this morning. Very little email again. Strange, but good I guess.

With very few distractions other than the little cat, within a half-hour I was in the novel this morning.

I cycled back a bit and added about 200 words, then took an Internet break and read a few stories on a news magazine I get. That was about a half-hour, then back to the novel for the first regular session.

Finished one regular session at about 1000 words, then took an extended break around 8. I got a shower, get dressed, and headed to Mary Ann's Mostly Books in Benson AZ. I had a list of six books that I wanted to get, plus I wanted to buy something on writing thrillers. Two and a half hours later, I got back. (Well, there was a side-trip in there to Walmart for groceries. But that was

all of a half-hour.)

Another half-hour putting stuff away, stashing the kitty-pit-emptying plastic bags, and checking email. Then here to write this and the topic above. Now almost another hour is gone.

I was headed back to the novel. But I decided to visit Amazon instead. There, I bought five more books, including four of the original five left on my list. So I'm good for reading for awhile.

The ones I bought (briefly) are

- Now Write! Mysteries: Suspense, Crime, Thriller, and Other Mystery Fiction Exercises from Today's Best Writers and Teachers by Sherry Ellis
- Mystery Writing in a Nutshell by John McAleer
- Cosmic Critiques: How and Why Ten Science Fiction Stories Work by Isaac Asimov
- Writing the Private Eye Novel: A Handbook by the Private Eye Writers of America by Robert J. Randisi
- Writing Mysteries: A Handbook by the Mystery Writers of America by Sue Grafton

So NOW back to the novel. I hope it missed me. (It's just after 1 p.m. So that was pretty much a 5-hour break. Some parts of the world they call that a half-day off, even though I took the half out of the middle.)

Okay. I am such a fortunate man. I enjoy what I do and recently it seems to have been enjoying me. A couple more long sessions for around 2500 words and I'm calling it a day.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 3807
Nonfiction Words: 1140

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
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Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words
Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words
Day 13… 3166 words. Total words to date…… 41879 words
Day 14… 3318 words. Total words to date…… 45197 words

Day 15… 3807 words. Total words to date…… 49004 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 73767
Total fiction words for the year…… 677758

Total nonfiction words for the month… 29388
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 71490 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Continuing Education, Harvey Stanbrough, Learning, Professional Writer Series, the writing life, Writing Into the Dark Leave a comment

The Journal, Tuesday, 12/29

December 29, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Oof. Only three days left in the month. In the year. It will be sad to see all those numbers reset to zero. But it will be fun to watch them grow in the new month and the new year. In the Topic below, I'll talk a little bit about Challenges.

Of Interest

Dean posted Heinlein's Rules Chapter Five over on his site today. A couple of things sprang out at me in that post and in the "regular" post below it.

By the way, he's keeping all of the Heinlein's Rules posts under a tab at the top of the page just in case you've missed any.

The first is of universal interest. He actually finally defines rewriting, mostly by defining what it isn't.

He also defines Creative Voice vs. Critical Voice. Go read it. Seriously. Really great stuff.

One caveat, and I've mentioned this to Dean. In the section where he goes off on "scam book doctors," he states plainly that "if you pay someone, [he or she is] not an editor." He fails to make the distinction between a copyeditor and the scammer. He also fails to mention that he sends many of his own manuscripts to a copyeditor after his first reader has finished with the manuscript. He has said many times before in various places that "a good copyeditor is worth his or her weight in gold."

A good copyeditor is someone the writer will pay (if the writer has a brain). And as I pointed out to Dean, many writers consider the terms "editor" and "freelance editor" and "copyeditor" interchangeable. So caution on taking anything at face value.

In fairness, I suspect Dean was burned early in his writing career by one or more folks who didn't have a clue what they were doing and he's been on the attack ever since. This is unusual

for him since he very seldom puts anything “negative” out there.

Anyway, in his regular post below that, I found that for maybe the first time ever, I’m making better progress on my novel than Dean is on his (grin). That’s mostly of personal interest. Not that such comparisons are valid, but it does make me feel good.

Topic of the Day: Challenges

As the new month and year rolls in and the numbers reset to zero, it will be a good time to begin watching. Or to begin watching again. And of course, I invite you to come along, to set your own goals, make and share your own daily progress.

For me personally, the numbers are what get me there. Putting words on the page against a daily goal and then watching the numbers grow. And holding myself accountable publicly. (Thank you.) Those are the things that work for me.

If I don’t illustrate anything else with this journal, I hope I can illustrate what it takes to be a professional fiction writer. Well, the bare-bones basics of what it takes. However you choose to do it, follow Heinlein’s Rules. That’s what it takes.

And so, here’s a personal challenge to all of you from me.

Join me in the 500 words every day challenge. And enjoy the process. Sit down and just write until you have 500 words. (Of course, if it keeps going, go with it. The challenge is for “at least” 500 words.)

That’s a half-hour per day in three 10-minute increments, two 15-minute increments or one 30-minute increment.

If you don’t currently practice writing off into the dark and trusting your subconscious, this is an excellent time and way to learn.

Beginning January 1, 2016, write at least 500 words per day every day through the year. That’s your target.

If you make it, you will have written 3500 words per week and 183,000 words during the year. Of course, if you exceed 500 words on some days… well, it’s all up to you.

Please come along. I’ll be very interested to see how long our (your and my) streaks will last of writing at least 500 words every day.

If you enjoy writing short stories, I also invite you to join me in writing at least one short story per week. Really no pressure there, because a short story isn’t a set quantity. By definition, a

short story is anything from 100 words to 10,000 words.

- 100 to 2,000 — Short Short Story (Short Short)
- 2,000 to 6,999 — Short Story
- 7,000 to 9,999 — Long Short Story (or Novelette)

Come on along. It's gonna be a great deal of fun.

The Day

Rolled out right at 3 this morning. Some email This morning. Got through that fairly quickly, then just messed around for awhile, playing games and so on. Groggy this morning.

Finally moved over to writing at about 5. Yesterday I started way back early in the novel and started moving through it, touching it here and there as necessary to make things match the "present" in the novel. I'll continue that today.

So I started reading and added not quite 500 words.

Stephen King says there are two kinds of writers: putter-inners and taker-outers. I guess I'm a putter-inner, at least on this book. When I'm a taker-outer, it's usually some self-serving "loop" that doesn't work in the context of the overall book.

I added in some sensory description where I'd left it mostly bare earlier. I must have been distracted originally. Then I took a break to get another mug of coffee and come here to write the intro and the topic above, then down to this far.

Checked Dean's site and found something for the Of Interest section above. I'll read that, then copy/paste it into my Word doc, then get back into the novel and just continue cycling through it.

Over the next few hours I kept going back to the novel. Of course, reading through it and then allowing my subconscious to play now and then isn't nearly as fast as simply running off in a completely new part. And I noticed that the farther I get through the manuscript, the less I need to add. Must be doing something right. (grin)

All right. I finished cycling through almost from the beginning of the book. I wrote some description that was absent in a few early scenes, and I wrote a new scene.

I feel like the ending is probably just over a horizon. I can't see it yet, but I have a feeling it's close. I have a feeling it will become apparent, maybe tomorrow. Either way, I hope to finish no later than December 31st.

As I write this it's only a little after 2 p.m. but I'm gonna stop here for the day. All the reading wore me out, plus there have been a lot of little diversions all day. Nothing to mention individually. Just little niggling 5- and 10-minute things that broke my concentration or took me away from the process for awhile.

So a low word count today, but a finish coming tomorrow or the next day.

By the way, this one has some leaning-toward-erotica stuff in it too, so very probably this will go with a different title and under a pen name. (grin)

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 1623
Nonfiction Words: 1100

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words
Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words
Day 13… 3166 words. Total words to date…… 41879 words
Day 14… 3318 words. Total words to date…… 45197 words
Day 15… 3807 words. Total words to date…… 49004 words
Day 16… 1623 words. Total words to date…… 50627 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 75390
Total fiction words for the year…… 679381

Total nonfiction words for the month… 30488
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 72590 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Harvey Stanbrough, Heinlein's Rules, Professional Writer Series, Writing Into the Dark Leave a comment

The Journal, Wednesday, 12/30

December 30, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Only two days left in the month. In the Topic for today, I'll talk briefly about goals and averages and failing to success.

Oh, and here's a clarification of my statement from yesterday about progress on the novel. I hope I'm on the verge of the final push to the end. Ideally, it will end on or before the 31st, but I won't force it. If it continues into January, that's fine. It has to be what it will be.

UPDATE: Looks like it's going to wrap up tomorrow. Is that perfect, or what? I don't quite see the ending yet, but all the characters are hinting at it.

Rough night last night, resulting in only a few hours' sleep. So writing today will be interesting to say the least. I'm just gonna take it easy today, as if I had a choice. (grin)

Of Interest

Dean posted Heinlein's Rules Chapter Six today.

By the way, if you're reading these and/or saving them to a Word document, be sure to read/save the comments as well. Some of them are very valuable. Never know where you're gonna find that perfect nugget you've been looking for.

I am totally stoked. If you scroll down to or click Working On Year End Stuff he lays out what he's written for the year. Now Dean has been a professional fiction writer for over 40 years. I figure he provides a pretty good benchmark against which to measure my own accomplishments.

All this time I've been counting only fiction to go toward anything important. But he's counting fiction and nonfiction, including email and blogs. Counting all of that, he wrote at "Pulp Speed Two" (over 1,200,000 words).

Made me frown. Shouldn't "pulp speed" be only fiction since that's what pulp writers wrote? Oh well. Different definitions I guess. (grin)

Anyway, he doesn't provide his fiction-only count. His fiction and nonfiction (not including email and blogs) was 711,000. And that's why I'm stoked. (grin) My fiction alone this calendar year will hit around 685000. I did better Oct 19 2014 to Oct 18 2015, but I'll take it. And I expect to hit at least Pulp Speed One in 2016 with only my fiction. We'll see.

Topic of the Day: Goals, Averages, and Failing to Success

I'm working on a novel that is tentatively titled for one of the minor characters, as it turns out. I've said a couple of times that I hope it ends on or before the 31st. Why does that matter?

Because when I roll out on January 1, my goals will reset to

- write at least 3200 new words of publishable fiction for the day
- continue a streak (started on Dec 17) of writing at least 500 new words of publishable

fiction every day
- write at least one new short story on or before January 7th (plus three more during the month)
- complete a new novel on or before January 31st

Now, those goals are hard and fast. They will force me to stretch a bit, BUT I also know they're attainable because I've reached all of them before.

- I wrote a new short story every week for 70 straight weeks. I hope to surpass that streak this time.
- The longest number of writing days it's taken me to write a novel is 29 (and that was in 31 calendar days).
- The shortest number of writing days it's taken me to write a novel is 14 (and that was in 14 calendar days).
- The greatest disparity between writing days (23) and calendar days (79) was on The Marshal of Agua Perlado (first sequel). But during that calendar time (Mar 9 to May 26) I also wrote the first two prequels (The Rise of a Warrior and Comanche Fire). (grin)

My point here is that even if you "fail" to attain a goal, if you're striving to reach it you will fail to success.

So set your goals. Set them hard and firm so they make you reach but so they're attainable. But keep in the back of your mind that what really matters in this game is the average.

Let me 'splain.

My goal every day is to write 3200 words. Some days I'll exceed that goal. (Today I missed it by thaaaaat much.) I hope the days I exceed it will make up for days when I fall a bit short. Either way, if I hit that goal exactly for only 313 days of the year, I will have written over a million words for the year.

So again, it's all about setting realistic goals. And celebrating when you attain a goal is fine, but despairing if you miss is just silly. After all, the goal will reset. If you watch it over a period of time, you'll find that you have a good average going.

My daily goal during the one year period from October 19, 2014 to October 18, 2015 was 3,000 words per day. During that calendar year, I wrote 750,466 words of published fiction. Can anyone legitimately call that failure? Yet if you do the math, you'll find that's an average (arithmetic mean) of only 2056 words per day. So apparently I failed in reaching my daily goal a LOT. But on average, I failed to success.

This year, I predict that average will rise. A lot. (grin) Stay tuned.

The Day

Rolled out at 4:30 this morning. As I mentioned above, it was a rough night physically for me. On the up side, since I had to stay up anyway I got to watch LSU return to full form and win

their game over Texas Tech. On the down side, I got about 3 hours' sleep all-in, both actual sleep and dozing off and on. Groggy this morning.

It's 8:30 as I write this. Thus far I haven't even opened my writing 'puter (Hal). I researched my own notes to get facts for the Topic, wrote that, ate breakfast, and came back here.

I just went back to my research for another half-hour to compare my 2015 goals with what I actually got done. Eerie how close it all came out.

Then I took a look back through my notes in the recent Genre workshop. From what I can tell, this novel falls under the overall umbrella of mystery. BUT (a couple of you) don't start clapping your hands and being all happy that I wrote a mystery, 'cause I didn't. Not really.

This novel is more closely defined as Suspense > Psychological Suspense with some implied erotic scenes that are integral to the plot. This is not a who-dunit. We know that much. What we don't know is who's going to catch the bad guy and how and when. I hope to find that out tomorrow. (grin)

Okay, so finally to the writing. It's 9:30.

Wrote about 500 words, then went to check out Dean's site. It was a real gold mine for the Of Interest section above.

Back to the writing sometime later. It's 3:44 right now, and over the past three and a half hours I wrote three pretty good sessions to at least come close to my daily goal. Total win.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 3092
Nonfiction Words: 1200

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
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Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words
Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words

Day 13… 3166 words. Total words to date…… 41879 words
Day 14… 3318 words. Total words to date…… 45197 words
Day 15… 3807 words. Total words to date…… 49004 words
Day 16… 1623 words. Total words to date…… 50627 words
Day 17… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 53719 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 78482
Total fiction words for the year…… 682473

Total nonfiction words for the month… 31688
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 73790 (since September 1)

Categories Uncategorized Tags Continuing Education, Dean Wesley Smith, Harvey Stanbrough, Learning, Professional Writer Series, Setting Goals, the writing life, writing, Writing Into the Dark Leave a comment

The Journal, Thursday, 12/31

December 31, 2015 by Harvey

Hey Folks,

Happy New Year's Eve. May it be a safe and enjoyable one for you. The Topic for today is a self-serving one: The Writing Year in Review. Because this is a journal of my work, I'll compare my own goals for 2015 with what actually happened. If nothing else, it should further illustrate that whole failing to success thing I was talking about yesterday.

Oh, and I'm a great-grandpa for the third time. My first great-grandson was born this morning in Roswell NM. Mother and son are doing well.

Of Interest

Heinlein's Rules Chapter Seven is up. Be sure to read back over the comments from the previous ones. There are now 47 comments on Chapter Five alone.

Topic of the Day: The Writing Year in Review

Okay, for this I thought I'd show you my goals from the beginning of 2015 and how that all worked out. As you will see, I was both miles off and almost dead on.

My 2015 goals (other than following Heinlein's Rules and writing 3,000 new words of fiction per day) were to

Write and release a new novel every two months based in my magic realism world in Mexico
The publication deadlines are 2/28, 4/30, 6/30, 8/31, 10/31 and 12/31.
The print release dates are the first day of the following month.
Write and release three other novels during the year.

Continue my current streak of writing and publishing one new short story every week.

So my overall goals for 2015 were

1,095,000 words of publishable new fiction (I fell horribly short at 686146 published words of fiction.)
9 new novels (6 in the MR world) (I wrote 9 new novels and a novella. I wrote no Magic Realism novels but 3 were set in the MR world of a small fishing village in Mexico)
52 new short stories (Nope, I fell short again at 47.)

As it turned out, I did follow Heinlein's Rules except for a period during late October and early November when I couldn't manage to dislodge my head. It's fine now.
I fell far short of my daily goal of 3,000 words per day. My average over the year was 1879 words per day. And here I always thought that was just my birth year. I'll be very interested to see how much that average rises over this next year.
In addition to the above, I also compiled and published 8 5-story collections and 4 10-story collections, and 2 other collections (The Wes Crowley Trilogy and The Wes Crowley Saga). Finally, I created 70 ebook covers.

So all in all, a pretty good year.

And just so I have it all in one place, here again are my goals for 2016:

Beginning tomorrow, my goals are as follows (repeated, sort of, from the 12/21 post on the main site):

Daily

- 3,200 new publishable words of fiction, plus whatever nonfiction (blog posts, articles)
- at least 500 words of publishable words of fiction *every day* (Going for a streak here. Even if I miss my daily goal, the 500 words will keep the streak alive.)

Weekly

- at least one new short story every week

Monthly

- one new novel per month

Annual

- 12 novels (some I hope in series)
- 52 short stories (at least one in every major genre except probably mystery)
- at least 1,000,000 publishable words of fiction (Not as hard as it sounds. If I meet my daily goal for 313 days I'll exceed this goal.)

The Day

Rolled out shortly after 2 this morning. It was a much better night, though I probably should have piled into bed an hour earlier. I stayed up to watch a bio on Sinatra. If you ask which one, you're too young.

I spent the first hour and a half, unapologetically, waking up, sipping coffee, and browsing propaganda in some news magazines I get. I'm not sure why the conservative pundits haven't yet figured out that when they spew a half-truth or lean on innuendo as if it were fact, it makes them just as unbelievable as it makes the socialist left.

Ah well. That's part and parcel of why I write fiction. Or as almost all of my characters would say in the right situation, flak 'em. Oh, did I misspell that?

Off to play with Hal for awhile. He's such a good little 'puter.

Got about 300 new words down (cycling back over what I wrote yesterday) and thought you guys might like to see this mess where I work. Now you can see what I'm talking about when I say I'm gonna turn right to go play with Hal.

The first pic (left) is my actual cockpit.

On the right is Hal. A place in the novel is highlighted so I'll know where I left off when I stop all this nonsense and get back to writing.

To the right of Hal you see about half of my little girl's food bowl. (grin) Her water dish is on the other end of that window sill. This is an adobe rammed-earth house. The walls are 3 feet thick. Makes for nice deep sills.

Everything looks yellowish because the overhead light is on in this pic. That's only because I was taking pictures. Usually I have only the little desk lamp on, reflecting off the cream colored blinds. If I had a backlit keyboard I wouldn't even want that.

In the center of that pic is the Internet/business computer with the Journal site open. On the left is the 22″ monitor I use mostly for designing book covers. You can see my little girl in the center.

The document to the right of her is actually this journal entry in a Notepad document. I put it all together there during the day and then copy/paste it here in time for the 5 p.m. emailing.

The second pic is my little girl on the ramp/mesa series her daddy put together for her. She is radically easy to please. (grin) And not spoiled At All.

Out of the picture behind her along the same wall is my reference library bookshelves where I keep most of my how-tos, the Internet modem, etc.

In front of her is a bookcase with my own books and my bar (third pic), minus the several Negra Modelos in the fridge. You know, should I ever again decide to indulge.

Okay, back to the actual business of the day.

I hoped the novel would end today, but it might not. It took a really strange twist, which is normal for this novel.

After I took the pics and wrote the stuff above, I wrote a new chapter toward the end of the book (currently Chapter 17).

Then I skipped way back to the pre-beginning and wrote a new opening chapter that was suddenly required by events later in the book.

It's nice being unstuck in time where the novel is concerned. (grin) So all told I'm just over 3,000 words on the day and not at the end yet. Like I said yesterday, we'll see.

Well, it's gonna be at least one more day on the novel. And that's fine.

I could have forced it. Meaning I could have "figured out" the role each main player (and two minor players) have in the big climax and laid it all out and written it and been finished with it today.

But I don't think it would have been as good as it will be when I finish just writing it off into the dark. Now, is that faith in a subconscious, or not?

But this is what I preach, so I can't abandon it just when it's getting good. (grin)

See you tomorrow.

Today's Writing

Fiction Words: 3673
Nonfiction Words: 1250

Writing of Norval Babineaux
(Words brought forward 5231)

Day 1…… 3059 words. Total words to date…… 8290 words
Day 2…… 3436 words. Total words to date…… 11726 words
Day 3…… 3056 words. Total words to date…… 14782 words
Day 4…… 1183 words. Total words to date…… 15965 words
Day 5…… 4248 words. Total words to date…… 20213 words
Day 6…… 2969 words. Total words to date…… 23182 words
Day 7…… 1128 words. Total words to date…… 24310 words
Day 8…… 2097 words. Total words to date…… 26407 words
Day 9…… 3414 words. Total words to date…… 29821 words
Day 10… 4072 words. Total words to date…… 33893 words
Day 11… 3206 words. Total words to date…… 37099 words

Day 12… 1614 words. Total words to date…… 38713 words
Day 13… 3166 words. Total words to date…… 41879 words
Day 14… 3318 words. Total words to date…… 45197 words
Day 15… 3807 words. Total words to date…… 49004 words
Day 16… 1623 words. Total words to date…… 50627 words
Day 17… 3092 words. Total words to date…… 53719 words
Day 18… 3673 words. Total words to date…… 57392 words

Total fiction words for the month…… 82155
Total fiction words for the year…… 686146

Total nonfiction words for the month… 32938
Total nonfiction words for the year…… 75040 (since September 1)

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