

Retirees and the "Write" Stuff

Contributed by Dean Whitney
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Although my comments in this article are primarily directed toward senior citizens sixty-five and above, they could also apply to virtually anyone over fifty-five who is retired or semi-retired and has a lot of extra time on their hands.

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Once it became abundantly clear that my music career was behind me, I was faced with a new challenge: what am I going to do with all this free time? Well, I considered starting another business and actually looked into a few possibilities-but nothing seemed to interest me. So, in my spare time (and believe me, there was plenty of it), I became a pretty doggone good gardener and eventually dubbed myself "Chauncey" (you know, like in the movie "Being There"). However, my yard isn't that big and gardening wasn't something I could do every day of the week.

Having been a recreational poker player for several year, I soon discovered online poker. If you've ever played online poker, you know how addictive it can be. I must point out, however, that I wasn't playing for real money. In no time at all, I racked up over 200K worthless credits. Even though I was having a moderate amount of fun, I was never tempted to plop down the entrance fee and play in the World Series of Poker, nor was I interested in going out on the Worldwide Poker Tour. What I realized was that I needed something more productive to do with my time.

And then last year, at the age of sixty, I discovered the joy of writing. It all started with an article I wrote and had published in the San Diego Union-Tribune. I then began writing my first novel, Pinch Hitter, which was just recently published. I'm now working on my second book, which I hope to publish in early 2009. Whether or not I'm any

good at it is a matter of opinion. However, while maintaining the discipline of writing every day, I stay out of trouble and keep my mind sharp.

So, here's what I want to say to the retirees who are constantly looking for something to do: even if you're able to keep yourself fairly busy, why not at least consider sharing some of the knowledge you've accumulated throughout your lifetime with others? Whether it be of a personal or business nature or a combination of both, everybody's life experiences are unique. Perhaps you have an idea for a work of fiction or just want to publish a book that features your all-time favorite recipes. Or, maybe you would simply like to write your memoirs. Several years ago, my sister and I encouraged our mother to do just that. Her life was filled with many interesting experiences, and we begged her to write it from her perspective. What better way to preserve your life story for your children, grandchildren, and all future generations. Unfortunately, she never got around to it. And when she left us three years ago, she took with her all of those unique experiences.

While I can think of many legitimate reasons for retirees to write, I cannot think of any reasons NOT to write. And it doesn't necessarily have to involve money; in other words, don't worry about selling it. The process alone will give you great satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Remember, like virtually everything else, the more you do it, the better you will become.

So, how does one get started, you ask. Well, if you don't already have one, I would recommend getting a computer and becoming familiar with a good word processing program. I use Word 07 and love its features. And then you need to do a ton of research on two things: writing in general and the subject on which you have chosen to write. Here's a good tip: the internet has all the resources you will ever need (just Google it, already). Of course, you'll also find some terrific books about writing in your local bookstore.

My older brother -- a retiree who was undoubtedly inspired by my book -- recently mentioned that he had a great idea for a novel. Being that he has a tendency to get bored easily, I encouraged him to at least start the process by putting his idea down on paper. He hasn't taken that first step yet, but I'll continue to encourage him as I do everyone with the time and the willingness to try their hand at writing.

Dean Whitney, a semi-retired music producer & publisher and avid baseball fan, recently self-published his debut novel, Pinch Hitter, through <http://BookLocker.com>. Dean also writes a baseball blog, which can be found at <http://deansbaseballblog.mlblogs.com/>. To learn more about Dean and his baseball novel, visit <http://www.deanrwhitney.com/>

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