

I Don't Want to Be a Pirate – Writer, maybe

By Robert S. Swiatek

Table of contents

1. Don't you understand English?
2. Make some lemonade
3. Read my lips and other body parts
4. Everything causes cancer
5. Computers...you can't live with them
6. How can I be overdrawn?
7. Sign before they read
8. Don't get caught in the WEB
9. Mousse marketing madness
10. This little piggy went to market
11. Smoke peace pipe
12. Eye patches and peg legs
13. Help – I need a paddle
14. If at first you don't succeed
15. Plant the potatoes now
16. When do you two get involved in this?
17. But that would leave you with one
18. Laughter is the best medicine
19. My English ain't the best
20. Voodoo acupuncture
21. I wrote a song but . . .
22. She criticized my brownstone
23. "Are you experienced?"
24. Smile...people will wonder what you're up to

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Norie Freedman, Patty Lynch and Abbie Swierat, who left the earth way too soon and to my mom, since I'm sure her genes were responsible for this book. Also, I couldn't have made it without her.

Introduction

Children are hereditary – if your parents didn't have any, you won't either.

Langston Hughes wrote a book called, *I Wonder As I Wander*, which I thought was excellent and had a great title. The more I read, the more amazed I am by the appropriateness of the titles given to so many books. It almost seems as though there is a title meister out there who reads books and then comes up with these gems. You'll see some of the explanations for my book titles as you read on.

Once you finish reading the last chapter of *I Don't Want to be a Pirate* – you can't just skip to it without reading the rest – you should realize where I came up with my title. Being a Seinfeld fan, I couldn't resist taking Jerry's line from the puffy shirt episode. A friend of mine mentioned that he didn't think that particular show was one of the top twenty shows and though it had some good laughs, I agreed with him. But since it was memorable, I thought I would use it.

The first consideration for any writer is to have a catchy title, one that people won't forget. My title could have been *The Journey of an Author*, but that sounds boring and probably won't sell books. It's also easily forgotten. A title should hang around like a hemorrhoid; thus readers might spread the word to others – about the book, not the other thing, which I don't wish on anyone.

As you read the book, you should be amused and even have a few laughs. I'll be disappointed if you don't at least smile. My previous five books are each known for their entertaining quality – part of that is the specific connection to the title. You may not laugh as much as watching the episodes of Seinfeld dealing with the marble rye, mutton, the Junior Mint or The Cubans, but I sincerely hope that you feel that this book is almost as funny as my 2005 book, *for seeing eye dogs only*. People told me that they laughed body

parts off while reading it. Next time I see them, I'll have to check what's missing and if it becomes them.

I have been writing for some time, as you will find out in this book. You will also discover where the idea for this book originated: a literary event in November 2005, in which I came very close to not participating. I will get into the details later. I feel that what I have learned from dealing with agents, publishers, writers, book stores and marketeers – you may have a different name for them but you haven't been there – will be of some assistance to other prospective writers.

I think the word “expert” is a gross exaggeration or misnomer. I really don't believe these people can be found, at least not on this planet. For example, consider the phrase, “terrorism expert.” I feel the term is misguided, since these individuals don't exist. If they did, why do we still have terrorism? Actually, it seems like those who strap explosives to their bodies or drive vehicles loaded with bombs are the “experts.” They have short lives, but of course need not worry about retirement or paying off their Discover Card bill.

I certainly do not claim to, nor will I ever be an “expert,” despite my dealings with the industry. There's so much yet to be learned; my growth associated with the book business continues with each passing day. If writing a book is not on your agenda, then my hope is at least that you will be entertained. If authors can benefit from anything in it, this book will be a success. By the same token, this book is intended to convince people that not everyone can be an author. It's not an easy trip.

They say that experience is the best teacher. Added to that might be that it's a hell of a way to learn. Heuristic learning is probably the best way to obtain knowledge, despite what comes with it. The first book I published, *The*

Read My Lips Cookbook tells of my journey in the kitchen, cooking for myself while not poisoning others. I did make chicken salmonella once – it wasn't intentional – but I was the only victim and it wasn't fatal.

After departing my parents' home – I wasn't booted out – I was forced to cook out of necessity, which you can read about in the cookbook. This book chronicles another trip. Along the way, I have had moments of great exhilaration and joy as well as times of disappointment. Most of the despair had to do with the fact that I had to deal with people who reached a level of incompetence.

There is another connection of the title to the book business, which deals with the piracy in the writing industry. When a writer winds up with under a dollar for a book that retails for twelve or thirteen dollars and the middlemen, such as the publisher and bookseller split the rest, a great injustice has been done. After all, the author is the one without whom there would be no book! I don't feel that such a pittance is a fair compensation for the effort. You can only call the resulting scenario piracy. And these people don't have eye patches. That, by the way, was another funny Seinfeld episode.

An additional significance of the title has to do with the life of a pirate. Being on the high seas, this individual certainly experiences adventure. Invariably, there comes a time when things aren't so rosy. The fan keeps getting struck when things hit it! Suppose he boards a boat seeking booty only to find out that the people on board have no cash, only American Express Travelers' Checks. These are worthless to him, as he doesn't have the ability to match the signature. His writing hand is the one with the hook.

When he heads over to the cafeteria for some grub – the dining room and chef have been replaced because of cutbacks in the corporation – he finds the main entree is

tripe, something he can't quite stomach. The soup de jour is black bean soup, another choice he doesn't favor. If you haven't read my first book, you'll miss the laugh with this bluish gray dish, or is it grayish blue? There are times when this pirate wishes his bird friend would find another home. Life, as he knows it may have its thrills, but there are bad times as well, not unlike the world of a writer.

Another meaning of the title concerns the career paths people take. In many cases they may study mathematics and wind up as social workers. That deviation may not be all that bad and the individual may even find a great deal of satisfaction in an alternate path. Parents may put pressure on their children to become doctors or lawyers. Other parents may even say that they don't care what a child does in life as long as she is happy. The best part may be that the father and mother actually mean it. Other offspring may not be as fortunate and as a result, the son revolts and says, "I don't want to be a pirate!" He doesn't say anymore since he's not sure about writing.

After finishing this endeavor, I thought of a slight variation in the title, with the change of a mere word. I'm sure that you can guess which one. I felt it was a great alternative, but after weighing all the possibilities, I decided not to alter what I had. You'll have to finish the book to really appreciate this other option and its significance. However, once you complete the journey, I'm sure you will agree that it would have been appropriate as well. My thought was to replace "Pirate" with "Bullfighter."

1. Don't you understand English?

It's tough to determine what really gets one going in an endeavor but I believe my writing adventure started way back before I was a teenager. I lived in the city of Buffalo, not far from St. Luke's Church, where our family worshipped. I also attended the school of the same name. Today those buildings now house the St. Luke's Mission of Mercy, located at 325 Walden Avenue in Buffalo and whose most important product is love. It is run by Amy Betros and Norm Paolini, and it provides compassion, food and shelter for the less fortunate.

My mom and dad rented a place at 375 Walden Avenue for the five of us – this included my two brothers, Tom and Ken. We lived upstairs and my parents tended a butcher shop on the first floor. My Mom was the main proprietor of the store as my Dad had a few other full time jobs. The business truly was a “Mom and Pop” store – they sold soda too! Dad was a workaholic and set an example for my brothers and sister relative to the work ethic. He also inspired me to write a book on work, which unfortunately he didn't live to see published.

That's probably enough of a background so let me continue. I had yet to reach my teenage years but I can recall some really exciting and happy moments at that address. Those came about when I went down the street to the library. Our family may not have been rich enough to travel to the ends of the earth but I made my own journeys through books. That small building provided me with the means to go to Europe, Africa or Asia without buying an airplane ticket. Yes, there was air transportation at that time even though the term “concord” referred to a type of grape and not a mode of high-class transportation. I can still recall the thrill of walking into a room with so many books and so little time.

Obviously I didn't read Shakespeare and Milton in those days. I really can't recall that many of the titles, but books piqued my interest in reading, which I think is a requisite if you plan to be a writer. I'll spend more time developing this thought later. However, I did check books out and read most if not all of them. Soon I'd returned for another batch.

At that time libraries didn't have CDs or DVDs or even videos. "Uncle Miltie" wasn't a relative of mine – one of my uncles reminded me of him, or maybe it was the other way around – but I did watch his program on a black and white screen. For those of you who are not older than dirt, "Uncle Miltie" refers to Milton Berle, the great comedian on the Texaco Star Theatre beginning in the late 1940s. Television was in its infancy and there were only two major networks. ABC had not yet arrived on the scene. Maybe I didn't view that much TV because there were no "reality" shows. Perhaps my limited television viewing had something to do with a preference for the written word. One good thing about that situation is that it ingrained in my brain the conviction that books were so much better than the addictive box in the living room. Today, the gap has gotten even wider and there is no sign that it will ever get close again!

We moved from that home to the house on Borden Road in Depew that my mom sold in the fall of 2004. My siblings and I, including my sister Pat, who was born after we moved, lived there through most of our childhoods and all of our teen years while my mom and dad spent half their lives there. Though I wasn't to see that library in Buffalo ever again, I found other ones. I continued reading and towards the end of my years at St. Mary's High School in Lancaster, I got involved with the school paper. This may have been the real beginning of my life as a writer.

Senior year I was the sports editor of the paper, *The Lance* and I became an ink-stained wretch. I wrote articles about the major sports: baseball, basketball and football. When you're the boss, you can write about the sports you like and pass off the other less desirable work to your subordinates. I had a system for getting information for the games as I created a log of the game I covered. In football, I reported each play in a notebook and, in effect had a play-by-play account of the game, which went something like this. Bob Gaiek, number 16 carried the ball for a 15-yard gain; I would write "16 – 15G." Marty Scherrer, number 18 completed a 20-yard pass to Tom Schmitt, number 14; I would record, "18 to 14 – 20G." Of course, to be able to accurately note each play, I roamed the sideline. This approach seemed to work quite well until one afternoon Coach Woj needed a person to work the chains and I was volunteered. The "chains" – still in use today, despite technology – consisted of a ten yard chain connected by two poles with a third pole, all of which determines where the ball is on the field and if enough yards were gained for a first down. You'll have to look up the rest. Suffice it to say this additional assignment resulted in quite a challenge as now I had multiple tasks.

Somehow I managed, and throughout the year, I wrote the articles for these sporting events. Writing about the games was thrilling but I'm sure it wasn't very exciting for people reading about the contests. As a writer in high school in 1960, even if I had a scandal to spice up the piece, I wouldn't have added that to the article. My writing could only be described as ho-hum. It just relayed what had happened on the playing field in factual detail and wasn't very colorful. I don't recall any humor being tossed in.

However, I do remember writing an article for Mrs. Jack Cavanaugh's English class that raised a few eyebrows.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

