

# The Writer Writes

## Archive Two



I can't tell you how many people tell me they've always wanted to write. Before finishing my novel, I gave it little thought because I didn't always want to write. Now that I'm writing and love to write, I find it is something easy to do and I want to share it with all the writer wannabes out there. It's my nature to try to help people, so when they say they want to write, I want to help. Problem is, it's making me late in the office.

I recently attended a memoir writing conference and even though I didn't leave with a cookbook method for writing memoirs, it did get me thinking about using memoirs as a tool to begin writing. Everyone has the material to write a memoir. One thing I realized at the conference is that when most people think of writing memoirs, they think of writing some version of the story of their life. It's mind boggling to try to start writing if that is your canvas. Start painting with a picture of a flower, not a picture of Yellowstone National Park.

Start with just a moment, maybe an hour or a day, something funny, something embarrassing, sad or amazing. We all have those stories. So pick one and write it down. Start simple. Make it five hundred words, basically a page. The instructor for the course asked us to write down what we were doing when we heard about the World Trade Center attack on 9/11. That's an easy one. It's your assignment so if you are sitting there right now thinking that you can't think of anything to write, start with that. What were you doing on 9/11?



Almost all of us can identify with what *you* were doing on 9/11. If you ask any group of Americans what they were doing on 9/11, everyone wants to tell their story. There's a connection. "I was at work when..." "I had just left the kids off at school..." But they tell the story differently than if you asked what were you doing yesterday morning at 9:00. "I was at work..." "I left the kids off at school..." I think that's one of the differences between writing a diary and writing a memoir.

When we read a memoir we were looking for something in the story that ties us together. A connection. I could write about my cat and the way her fur gets all over things, or her hair balls, or

the way she bats a pencil around. Someone who doesn't enjoy cats might not be interested, but cat lovers anywhere will smile and remember their special cat moment, stepping on a warm wet hair barf or something. You're getting it now.

So a memoir needs to have a point, a message, a moral, something the rest of us can connect to. It's not just a diary. But you can start with a diary. I just want you to think about writing. Period. Ink on paper. It's like exercising. You probably can't go out and jog three miles right off the bat. You have to start with a half mile. Gradually you will be able to do the three. I think you can condition yourself to writing, get over a fear of writing, realize that you can do it. Sometimes people who condition themselves to jogging three miles end up running marathons.