

Biography

I was born and raised in Kansas. One of five children and a university professor for a father so vacations were cheap and cheerful. I never felt deprived. Somewhere along the way, a feeling developed that there was a big, beautiful world out there which Kansas, bless it, did not represent. My first trip to Europe was on my twenty-first birthday. I celebrated by getting drunk in JFK before boarding the Air France flight. Even a hangover couldn't mar the unforgettable sight of flying in to Nice airport the next morning.

Since then, over thirty years traveling on business has rather taken the shine off travel per se. Arriving somewhere - great. Sitting in an airplane feels like being in a cattle car. But I'll never forget that first sight of Europe.

I read a good deal as a kid and particular books jolted me. The first of these was J.D. Salinger's 'Catcher in the Rye.' But there were others, and if you lined them all up you'd have an eclectic mess. P.G. Wodehouse, for example. Kipling's 'Just So' stories. Noel Coward's plays. Works that have no common denominator. Except, as I think now, they do. Each created a distinct world, to delight in (Wodehouse) or suffer in (Salinger), but a world that was unique and credible.

I began telling stories, not just reading them, during a family holiday at Hotel Pitrizza, Sardinia. I was thirty five. Each night after dinner, my wife took our two year old to bed and I was left at the restaurant table to amuse my five year old daughter. I started telling Charlie and Carol stories. Charlie is a mouse and Carol a five year old girl. They had fabulous adventures. They still do, I'm sure. My girl listened, gazing through the pergola at the Ligurian Sea, hugging her knees, eyes alight with imagination while she absently fondled the nose of her stuffed toy, Baerli. It doesn't get much better than that for a father. Plus I could finish the bottle of wine.

Charlie and Carol became a must-tell series at bedtime for daughter and her two younger brothers. Their mother was never allowed to hear them. They were a secret history. Carol kept Charlie hidden from her parents, you see.

That experience planted a seed which took some time to germinate. And at some point about fifteen years ago, I started to write. Crime stories (Charlie and Carol solved crimes) because the crime genre is broad enough to indulge all the passions. Including those generated by my particular passion: Renaissance art. Write about what you know, they say. To which I would add: what moves you.

I have written several short stories, all in the 'cultural' crime genre, and am working on a new novel. I write every day, even if it's only a few hundred words. The frustrating part is rereading something you've toiled on for days and the left-hand side of your brain, the inner critic, says, 'That's crap.' I console myself with Hemingway's observation that the first draft of anything 'is shit.' And you keep at it, and every once in a while the Muse delivers. It seems to happen when your guard is down. Every writer knows that moment. It's a

feeling that lasts only as long as you're not aware you are feeling it. I think it's why writers write.