

# Writers Monthly PDF



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**W.D. Kilpak III**

**A Guide for Professional Writers  
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## How Did I Get Here? By W.D. Kilpack III

For as long as I can remember, I've been a writing and telling stories. Before I earned how to write, I would my stories. I drew spaceships, then acted out the battles, drawing in the laser blasts and explosions after erasing parts of the ships that were blown away by enemies. I've blown up the U.S.S. Enterprise 10,000 times. I originally wanted to be a cartoonist and start my own line of comic books. I loved superheroes (and still do!) and would draw the comics, as well as write the stories.

My first comicbook character was Super Mouse, created when I was six. He was pretty much Superman, but a mouse, and he beat up cats. It was very serious stuff, not Tom and Jerry. That was my dream until I wrote my first book, when I was 12.

Since then, I always had pencil and paper with me, so I could jot down a few ideas when the need hit me. Since publishing novels, it's amazing how many people I grew up with mentioned my red, three-ring binder I carried around with me, loaded with lined paper, so I could write down my thoughts as they came to me. That compulsion persists today, although I've since updated for the computer age.

I've been surrounded by people who have been supportive and contributed to me developing my skills. My creativity has been encouraged throughout my life, dating back to when I wasn't even school age. I used to go to my \ mom and ask her to feel my head because I was pretty sure that I was growing horns. She felt my head with both hands and said, "Yep, I can feel them!"

When I went back again, she said she was sure they were bigger than the last time, and so on. My first publication credit came when I was nine years old, when my teacher, Ms. Adams, submitted a poem I wrote to a contest (without my knowledge). Then the poem won first place and was published. In sixth grade, Mrs. Ferrin, who taught my Language Arts and Gifted & Talented classes, told me to write a new chapter of a novel for every writing assignment in those two classes over the year, regardless of the actual assignment. As a result, by the end of the year, I wrote my first novel.



***The author speaks with a fan at his booth at a FanX Convention's pop culture event.***



***Author W.D. Kilpack III (right), a panelist with other authors at the Life, Universe and Everything science fiction convention in Utah.***

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From that moment on, my creer goal changed to novelist. In eighth grade, Mrs. Demond, who was my Computer Science teacher, read my hand-written manuscripts for a sci-fi trilogy I had written, and pulled strings for me to be her student aide, but my time was to be spent typing up my books, since I didn't have a computer at home.

In ninth grade, my Honors English teacher, Mrs. McKinnon, was extremely supportive, reading my stories to the class and persuaded the school to laminate a bunch of maps I had been drawing when creating the setting for that first novel I wrote when I was 12.

In tenth grade, Mrs. Sawaya, who taught my Journalism class and was the newspaper and literary-magazine advisor, really pushed me to write. She read my work, got me to take part in newspaper staff as a writer and cartoonist, until I was editor-in-chief my senior year. For literary magazine, she selected a lot of my writing and art, and I eventually served as editor for two terms. In college, Dr. Fogo, who taught most of my communication classes and was the newspaper advisor, really helped me raise my level of writing to a higher level. That mentorship continued when I was getting my master's with Dr. Hodgson.

As a result of all this work, I am a writer. I have worked as a writer in many areas: creative writing with my novels and short stories, poetry, screenwriting, news, technical writing, proposal writing, public relations, and marketing. The way I look at it, writing is writing. Just teach me the rules or the format you want, and I can do it.

I got my first writing job when I was 15, when I was hired by a local sports publication as an editor. They didn't ask my age at the interview, I had a mustache, they liked my writing samples and résumé, so they assumed I was older. Then they kept asking me to cover events all around the state, which I kept having to divert to other writers. Finally, they confronted me, asking why. So I had to admit that I didn't have a driver's license because I was 15, so I couldn't drive anywhere beyond where I could take a bus.



**Author W.D. Kilpack III (right) and his wife Alison (middle) speak with young aspiring writers during Utah Authors Day.**

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Gratefully, they didn't fire me, although they took away the editorial position, and allowed me to continue writing. That led to me meeting people in other local publications, then they would ask me to do freelance writing for them, then more writing beyond Utah, and it just kept spreading. I wrote a lot of news articles this way, most of them being stories I stumbled across and knew would be newsworthy.

So, by the time I was 20, I had more than 200 publication credits. Because I was only 20, I did not appreciate what I had, and stopped counting how often I was published, stopped getting copies, stopped tracking where they were, etc. It's been enough time now that I don't even remember them all. I DO NOT recommend doing this. It was a HUGE mistake. But I had to learn that lesson the hard way.

When I got married, there came a major shift. First, I realized that I could not give my family the quality of life that I wanted off my income as a freelance journalist. So I sold out. I became what my fellow journalists and I called "a sellout journalist" and went into public relations and marketing. I could make a lot more money there and have a more consistent income. I was there for the Telecom Boom (which was fun, until it crashed). I was there for the Mortgage Boom (also fun, until it crashed). In that time, I had continued freelancing here and there, but could not put in the time to pursue getting my novels published. So they went on the back burner in exchange for raising a family. Fast forward ... Covid shutdown. My youngest just graduated college. It was a sign. Amazon had democratized book publishing. I had already had my share of problems as a freelancer with publishers changing my work, giving credit to others, etc. I was not interested in going through that with my novels. It was never even a consideration.

So I went to work. I was finally going to pursue my dream, the one that came to life when I was 12. Although I was not pursuing publishing my novels while raising a family, that did not mean that I was not writing. I have 30-plus novels sitting and waiting. I jumped in with both feet. With my marketing background, which also included art, I could do my own cover design and promotion.

I have just been going to work and loving every minute of it. The critics have been amazing. The awards have been just humbling. I always knew it was not a question of "if" but "when." This just put that much more of the power in my own hands, which is great. #



**Author W.D. Kilpack III "method writing" on a project where characters have to wear gas masks on the surface. (R) Looking at his wife: "Did you just take my picture?"**