

The writing life

Author Matt Love discusses his creative process

By MATT LOVE

Since 2002, I've given over 1,000 presentations about my books and various other Oregon literary/historical topics. Traveling all over the state (and recently into coastal Washington), I've gigged at bars, barns, bookstores, galleries, coffee shops, theaters, radio stations, television studios, utility closets, fairs, fields, parties, prisons, libraries, parks and historical museums and met thousands of fantastic people who have responded enthusiastically to my personal, somewhat eccentric approach to telling Oregon/Pacific Northwest stories.

During this time, I've also taught close to 50 writing workshops on a variety of topics and met hundreds of aspiring writers of all ages.

At the conclusion of these events and workshops, I am invariably asked some or all of the following questions:

1. Where do you get your writing ideas?
2. Who or what is your muse?
3. What's your writing process?
4. How do you cope with literary rejection?
5. What's your best piece of advice for aspiring writers?
6. What's the secret to your success?
7. What type of writing workshop or group do you recommend?
8. Do you think you would have become a writer without the beach?
9. What's your next writing project?

Generally, I believe no formula exists for becoming a writer, although the bookstores and internet are crammed with how-to guides that preach otherwise. I am also highly dubious of any writer/oracle who teaches workshops as if that teacher has the answer — THE ANSWER — carved in a stone tablet and handed down from ... some-



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Author and Coast Weekend contributor Matt Love is constantly inspired to write by Oregon's beaches.

where. I've sat through some of these workshops, and they seemed utterly preposterous to me.

Nevertheless, many audience members want answers to divine something useful from my experiences, so here's generally what I say:

1. Beach at dawn. (Best place to think. No distractions. No idiots. I

never use the phone or listen to music there. Watching the waves break is all I need to get the creative mind going. Having a dog helps, too.)

2. Beach. (I go on average three to five times a week, every day in the summer.)

3. Beach. (I visit the beach and write the openings of pieces in my head. Walking helps me perfect

them. When I return home, I sit down at the computer and type away. I never stare at a screen without knowing what I'm going to write first.)

4. Beach. (I would have quit writing along time ago if I didn't have the ocean to annihilate my angst and ego after receiving rejection after rejection from mainstream

publications and publishers. The old sound of the ocean helps me start anew every time I hear it.)

5. Beach. (As in: Go to it all the time and think about what you want to write instead of wasting time inhaling popular culture.)

6. Beach. (Making the time to write translates to going to the beach all the time, which is my preparation to write. Weather doesn't matter. Is that a secret? No: It's out there for anyone to try.)

7. Beach (It's totally free — in Oregon at least — and you won't ever have to endure the one narcissistic lunatic who typically ruins a writing workshop or group.)

8. No. The desert and mountains don't inspire me the same way. Obviously, this isn't the case for every writer; different landscapes or cityscapes appeal to different personalities. I just know it would have never happened for me without the beach, Oregon's publicly owned beaches, preserved in the manner they have been for all those years, until I came along to discover them in my early 30s, when I moved to the Oregon Coast some 19 years ago.

9. Oregon's beaches. July 7, 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the state's famous 1967 Beach Bill, which protected the dry sands area of the beaches from privatization and commercial exploitation. I hope to collaborate with many other writers, artists and entrepreneurs in creating a publication and multiple public spectacles that celebrate this important piece of legislation. Naturally, I got this idea at the beach.

Matt Love is author/editor of 14 books, including his debut novel about Oregon's beaches, "The Great Birthright." They are available at coastal bookstores, through www.nestuccaspitpress.com and local libraries.