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Great Beginnings

By Barbara Carr Phillips

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A birth. First day of school. A new job. A wedding. Beginnings are hopeful times. A clean slate with infinite possibilities. Yes, beginnings are awesome.

Unless you're a writer staring at a blank page.

When I type the beginning of a new story, it sounds something like this:

Tap, tap, tap, delete, delete, delete;
Tap, tap, tap, click, block text, right click, cut;
Tap backspace, tap, tap ;
Tap, tap, , ctrl-A, delete.

Sound poetic? It is in a tragic sort of way because soon my mind is on other things, like how I will move all of my furniture and family into a cardboard box under a dark and lonely bridge. I don't know any publications that pay writers for a blank piece of paper. If you do, please e-mail me and put me out of my misery.

I keep thinking that writing an exciting opening will just happen the first time I try, but it hasn't so far. Why? Because it's too much pressure. If my reader doesn't get involved in the first paragraph, she or

Great Beginnings

he is on to the next story. No matter how much I toil and sweat over the middle and the end, I'm keenly aware that I'll lose my audience without an interesting lead.

And of course, I'm being optimistic even saying that, because in the beginning I must hook my editor. If I don't, my story is not even going to appear in print for a reader to ignore.

So, how do I create a great beginning to a story? Well, after my tapping, sighing and groaning session is finished, I usually tell my annoying internal editor "thanks, but no thanks," and cram her into my overflowing file cabinet. Then I just write. I unleash the tornado of words and ideas and let them scatter across the screen with lightening speed and I don't stop to reread them.

For example, I wrote a story about my stepson Austin. I wanted to talk about what a great kid he is, but

it was hard to find a starting point. So I started my first draft at the beginning: "I was born at St. Francis Hospital in Beech Grove, Indiana on May 12, 1962 to Dorothy and Max Carr."

Well, okay, I didn't actually start at that particular beginning. But wanting to educate my readers, I gave all kinds of background information so that they would know where I'm coming from. My chronological list was a boring recitation of facts because I was afraid the reader wouldn't "get it" otherwise. All history and little action, no emotion, no dialogue — if I would have sent the manuscript to the magazine that way, no readers.

But going through this process always snaps me to my senses when I begin the second draft. This time, I let my internal editor out and read through my manuscript and, TA DA, a beginning always arises from it, usually somewhere in the middle. So I do a click, block text, right click, cut and get rid of all of the text I wrote before my TA DA moment. And the ensuing sigh is a sigh of relief and not one of frustration. I don't need all that history to tell the story, but writing the history helps jog my memory about the when, what, where, how and who I do want to write.

If you're having trouble getting started, just sit down and write. When you get to the action, the dialogue, the humor, the tears, you've found your great beginning.

As for me, I'm keeping my eye on the refrigerator box under the overpass at the Market Street ramp to downtown Indianapolis. If I ever see it's occupants, I might have to stop and ask my burning question, "were you a writer before you moved here?" But that's another story, and my column on great beginnings is now at the end.

Happy writing!

Barbara Carr Phillips, journal instructor, believes dreams come true when you learn to journal your way to success. Visit <http://journalworkshops.net> to order your one-on-one journaling session or to sign up for her free e-zine.

Your Greatness Begins With The Tiniest Of Waves

By Josh Hinds

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Everything begins with the smallest of gestures --- I think it's for this very reason that many of us never get around to reaching the points in our life where we'd like to be.

The timing just never seems to be right. We never have quite enough money for our undertaking or venture. We convince ourselves that we're not smart enough to go for our master's degree, or go to go back to college... To this I can only say one thing --- HOGWASH!

My friend, the simple fact is that if you wait for "just the right moment" before you undertake any significant venture you're likely going to be about where you are now --- still waiting. Why is that?

Because as most anyone who has gone before you will tell you, there is rarely a "right time" to set out in search of ones destination.

Sure, there are variables that can come into play. For example, if you're dream is of starting a home business, yet you rely on the day to day income that your job provides the last thing you'd want to do is to simply quit that job. However, what's stopping you from starting and working it around your existing career? Then as your business takes off you can choose (or not) to move fully into your business and phase out your old job.

What if it's not a business you want to pursue? What if it's the farthest thing from a business? No problem! The same general rules can be applied to just about any undertaking.

Your own creativity and thought's will narrow down the details. Simply taking those first awkward steps can literally set in motion a whole string of events that end up propelling you forward.

Things begin with an idea, but your action, no matter how small it may appear at first --- gives fuel to the fire and eventually determines how successful your outcome. Remember, the biggest of fires starts with the smallest of embers.

While it may be true that you have no control over your beginnings. With enough courage to undertake and learn new skills we can indeed take control of our outcomes. We have no choice as to whether we're born into poverty or wealth, but at least to some extent we can determine if we'll stay there.

This doesn't mean that it won't be one heck of a fight to leave such humble beginnings if that's what we want. However, one need only look at the countless examples of those who started from much humbler beginnings then you and I, yet achieved far greater things then life would have believed possible.

Look at such examples not in awe, but rather from a point of view that you are as capable of greatness as your fellow man or woman. Set out on your path today with the knowing that greatness is within you. The objective is for you to figure out how to best bring it out... To your success, Josh Hinds

Written by Josh Hinds of <http://www.GetMotivation.com> Sign up for my ezine at <http://www.GetMotivation.com/ezines.html> Josh is also the co-founder of <http://www.AudioMotivation.com> – which includes an abundance of self-improvement resources as well as exclusive audio interviews with leading experts in the areas of motivation and personal development.



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