

Communication 4312 – So You Want to Be A Writer, Part II

Continuing the previous discussion on this topic....

Well, let's start with this. You've got to be interested in people. That's another way of saying that you've got to be curious. You ought to want to know a lot about just about everybody you meet.

Where are they from? How'd they get to where they are? What's their background? Where did they go to school? What were the influences on them? What are their likes and dislikes? Etc., etc., etc.

This is something you can practice in so many ways. Begin collecting people by writing about them in your notebook. You are sitting near someone in class, or in a lab, or somewhere else. Strike up a conversation. Then, record basic information about them.

Keep information on your teachers the same way. Study them. Find out what makes them tick. How do they know what they know?

I'm not talking now so much about interviewing in relation to a story. I'm just talking about a mindset that you grow into where you become a person who is interested in lots of things. Nevertheless, some aspects of curiosity are going to always hold.

For example, find out all you can about a person in relation to what he or she does. If it's a blacksmith, where did they learn blacksmithing? Does this person make pottery or baskets or wood bowls? If so, how did they get to the point in their lives when they began doing this for a living?

Most people go through certain stages in their lives. These stages may be subtle or they may seem at the time to be very important. Take that as a possibility when you are talking with someone. See if you can get them to talk about the turning points in their lives. But, here's the catch: asking about these things directly may or may not work. You've got to approach them in a way that will cause them to reveal something of themselves to you. This is a good time to be practicing that.

■ David McHam