

Communication 4312 – On Being Curious

Curiosity may have killed the cat, but curiosity is what makes writers do what they do. You've got to be curious. You've got to want to know everything you can about everything. When it comes to people, you've got to want to know just about anything they are willing to tell you.

Here's a good rule: try to find out one interesting thing about everyone you meet. You can do that with people in this class and in other classes of yours. And what about your teachers? What do you know about them?

Once you begin to know something about someone, dig deeper. See if you can figure out something more about them. Let's take your teachers, for example: how did they get to the point they are? Were they always interested in the subject matter? What events led them to the University of Houston?

[Everyone has turning points in their lives. Discovering what those are isn't easy. But, finding them may be a worthy goal.]

Suppose you are doing a story on someone: Ask questions, be interested. The incidentals may not be that important in the long run. But, they may help you find out what the story is about. If you keep asking enough questions eventually something will bubble forth that's worth using.

[Keep asking yourself, what's the story about?]

More likely, you'll be able to use some piece of information to get at a larger concept. The key is connecting the incidentals to more significant questions.

Any story you do is going to be about this particular person in the context of what he or she is doing or thinking or working on or concerned about.

Whatever happens in the interview or conversation, don't lose sight of that. You may have to work, though, to dig that out. That's what writers do. The oldest adage for writers is this: you can't write it if you don't have it. So, getting the information is the first step in the writing process.

■ David McHam