

## CHAPTER ONE

### TOM'S TALE

I FEEL THAT IF YOU ARE GOING TO PONY UP TO THE TABLE with your time and energy, not to mention your intestinal fortitude, the very least I can do is share a bit more with you about who I am and where the plan

you will be following came from. Plus, I have found that there are just so many less-than-worthy-folks out there, hiding in the shadows, talking about writing and especially spirituality, that you at least deserve to know a little bit about me, my method, and how I came to pen this book. So, here's my story.

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Late one summer evening, at the age of fourteen, as I lay on my parents' side lawn staring up at the stars, I asked the question that had haunted me for years.

“Why is it that I want to write?”

I was asking the One who goes by many names but is most often referred to as God. I had always had a good, close, personal relationship with God. Thank God (no pun intended). I was just coming to grips with the fact that my childhood had been much more difficult on me than I realized, and it was to God I ran each day to talk and listen. So by my mid-teens, having a heart-to-heart with the Almighty had become rather routine. I knew I would receive an answer to my question. As it came back I could feel my body vibrating with every word as it formed. It was almost as if God had been waiting for me to ask this very question and it was as though I could actually feel God's excitement coming through with the reply.

“You want to write, you were born to write because you see so much beauty and wonder in the world and this is the best way to convey it so others

can begin to see it and enjoy it as well,” the voice said, straightforward, direct, and clear.

Finally, the obsession I had since childhood finally began to make sense; reason began to appear behind my obsession, this urge to write which began at the age of eight.

“It is not necessary to seek God because God is already the essence of who you are. To connect with God, simply remove all judgments and thoughts that do not bless you and others.”

—PAUL FERRINI

The answer came through so crisply and clearly. I wondered why I had waited so long to ask the question in the first place. My delay must have had to do with my feeling of unworthiness. I mean, who was I, the son of a blue-collar father, to think that someone would actually want to read what I had to say? Who was I to even think I had the ability to write well enough for people to want to read what I wrote as well?

“What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.”

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Looking back now though, all the signs were there. All that was off was the attitude I had toward myself. Recognition of what I was meant to do with my life

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vocationally first came to me at the age of eight. That year for Christmas, my aunt and uncle had given me a two-foot-by-three-foot cork bulletin board. Immediately after hanging it in my bedroom, a never-ending stream of words began pouring through me and I began writing them down and tacking them up on the board.

In no time at all, the corkboard was completely full. I began using the tacks to hold more than one scrap of paper. Soon the tacks would hold no more, and I began capturing my inspirations in notebooks. It was at that time I realized that deep down inside I was a writer.

From that time forward, writing always came easily for me. In fact, I finished in the top two percentile nationally in communication skills on my college placement exams, this after I had literally refused to participate in any form of writing and/or studying in high school.

Another time while in college, I was assigned to write a review on a play for my college newspaper. However, I only had twenty-five minutes to complete the review after the play was done to be able to get the article in on time. Of course, the short amount of time I would have to complete the piece would not allow me to do any “thinking” (much more on this later).

I finished the piece in fifteen minutes. I received more compliments on my writing from that piece than I had received from all the other articles I had written previously for the paper combined.

My theory about the naturalness of writing being

available to all of us, almost like it was a God-given gift bestowed upon all of us, was taking shape.

“We do not write in order to be understood;  
we write in order to understand.”

—C. DAY LEWIS

Shortly after graduating from college, I moved on to a one-season temporary internship with the Pittsburgh Pirates and for the first time in my life I felt pressure to become like everyone else.

I had only taken the job with the Pirates because of my love for baseball, which was second only to how deeply I felt about writing. I had possibly been the only senior on campus that hadn't applied for any jobs. I didn't want a job. I wanted to write, to be an author. I hadn't ever been clearer on anything in my young life.

Despite my academic complacency in high school, I transformed myself into an outstanding student at the university level. My college, in an effort to further its reputation, fixed me up with the Pirates. That year was 1979, the magical season of Willie “Pops” Stargell and the “Family,” the most charismatic group of ballplayers in the modern era of baseball. The Pirates won the World Series that season. Pops brought us back from a three-games-to-one deficit to win a deciding Game Seven with a classic homerun. He had promised to hit that homerun only a few hours earlier for an eleven-year-old boy dying of leukemia who openly realized he would not make it through that night.

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As exciting as the season had been, I never had any aspirations to stay with the Pirates. With the World Series every kid had always wanted to win under my belt, I was planning to follow my heart to New York, where I was going to settle in and write my first book. However, I had become a fixture with the Family. I was offered a big raise and a permanent position was established just for me, so I allowed myself to be convinced to stay.

Yet the writer in me kept calling to be let out. It relentlessly drove me to use whatever few free hours I had to feverishly follow the callings of my heart.

“Surrender does not transform what is, at least not directly.

Surrender transforms you. When you are transformed, your whole

world is transformed because the world is only a reflection.”

—ECKHART TOLLE

*The Power of Now*

However, by that time, practicality had set its roots deeply within me. For the first time, I thought I had to be an authority on writing and publishing to become the author I longed to be. As a result, I forgot all about my theory on the naturalness of writing.

By that time I recognized that my college education hadn't been able to offer me the evolution as an author

that I had sought. So, I took to reading every book on writing that I could find. In eighteen months I had read them all, filling 148 legal pads with notes. In those pads, I was sure the conscious, magic formula I longed for would be found, but what I sought couldn't be found there.

I then turned to the biggest asset that I had at that time: my job with the Pirates, which put me in the company of many bestselling and world-renowned authors. Liberally utilizing my extensive contacts, I began interviewing every author I could. To each one I asked the same question, "How do you become an author?"

The best answer I got was from Dick Young, the so-called Dean of American Sports Writers at the time, who replied to my question by simply saying, "You write."

I initially poo-pooed Dick's response, not realizing its true significance. I kept going solely because I did not believe that God would have given me such a strong calling to write without providing me with the route to live it; of that, more than anything else in my life, I was sure. Yet, on the other hand, I was still convinced that I had to find the necessary formula that so many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, had sought before me on not only how to easily and enjoyably write books but get them published as well. However, it was nowhere to be found, neither in all the obvious places I looked, nor within all the orthodox methods I had studied. They were a deep and dark frustration at

the time.

It is my firm belief that many of us don't change until the pain becomes so great that we have to. As a result, desperation can be a necessary predecessor to greatness, and at that time in my life I was feeling very desperate.

Finally, tired of feeling this pain and not being able to find any solution, I got down on my knees and asked for divine guidance. I expressed my frustration. I shared the fears that I had about living my life without being able to live my dream, and how I felt that doing so was really dying. Then I realized the true reason for my despair. The despair had to do with the fact that I had stopped writing, which had come so naturally to me, and as a result I had severed my truest and most direct connection with God. It was also at that time that I promised to share with others whatever solutions God would offer me so that they, hopefully, wouldn't have to suffer as long or as hard as I had been suffering.

Two mornings later I woke up hours before my alarm was set to go off, and I heard the words of Dick Young rolling around over and over again in my head. It was then that I finally realized that when I had started searching, I had stopped writing, which was the very reason my connection with God had been severed and my life had become such a depressing mess shortly thereafter.

“Unprovided with original learning, unformed in the habits of thinking, unskilled in the arts of composition, I resolved to write a book.”

—EDWARD GIBBON

So, I returned to what had once come so naturally for me. In response, the words literally seemed to write themselves. In fact, I felt stronger and more jazzed after writing the 4,000 or so words than I did at any other time during the day. I could see a clearer and deeper meaning behind everything that was happening in my life. I knew exactly what it was that I needed to do: write, write, and continue to write daily, every hour, every minute of my time that I could squeeze out.

Embedded in the act of actually writing, what most writers miss, is the faith, the wisdom, and the direction one needs to live life. I also clearly understood that I didn't have to try to be something I had been since I was born. I had already connected with my inner author, which I now refer to as my Divine Author Within (DAW), my true and absolute pipeline to the natural communicative abilities between God and every one of us, which I had left behind when I tried to figure out how to become what I already was.

“Literary men are. . .a perpetual priesthood.”

—THOMAS CARLYLE

As a result of that realization, amazing things began happening in my life. Overnight my DAW urged me to approach Willie, the most popular athlete in the

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country at the time, about co-authoring his life story.

However, no matter how strong the draw was, I was deeply hesitant. Willie Stargell had been severely taken advantage of by a co-author a few years earlier. This author had chosen to fabricate certain aspects of Willie's story to make it a more sensational read. Since opting out of the deal, Willie had sworn never to become embroiled in a project like that one again. However, after working together through one World Series victory and the Pirates' next three seasons, Willie and I were the best of friends. I was hesitant to approach him, though, since I didn't in any way want to jeopardize our friendship.

Nonetheless, the draw to speak with him wouldn't let me go. I finally approached him and confessed my aspirations. Willie listened attentively and compassionately, as he always did. He then shared his reflections of the pain, frustration, and embarrassment he, his friends, and his family had suffered at the hands of his former co-author. Yet, he concluded by telling me that there was one and only one person with whom he would ever trust enough to enter into a venture of that sort again...and I was that person.

The incident caused me to see how my purpose, my dream of becoming an author, and most of all my connection, had never given up on me, even though I had tried to give up on them. They were willing to follow me wherever I strayed.

Never having sold a book before, I once again asked for divine guidance. Shortly after arriving in my

office the following morning, the man who ran our mailroom came in with my morning's stack of mail. In it was a brochure from Scott Meredith, a literary agent in New York; how he had gotten my address I did not know. Nor did I know at the time that Scott was the top literary representative in the world.

So, unknowingly, I casually picked up the phone and gave him a call. After I explained why I was phoning, his receptionist quickly patched me through. Once Scott heard what I had to say, he couldn't wait to meet with Willie and I. Coincidentally, the team was scheduled to be in Manhattan the following week to play the New York Mets, so a meeting was planned.

“No matter where your life takes you, no matter how far you stray from the path, you cannot

extinguish the spark of divinity within your own consciousness.

It was and is God's gift to you.”

—PAUL FERRINI

Once the three of us got together, an immediate kinship formed. Scott gave us both his private home phone number, signed us to a contract, and we were on our way.

Six weeks after that date, Scott sold my first book to Harper & Row, the third largest publisher in the world, and Larry Ashmead, one of the business's finest

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editors. Scott sold it for an amount equivalent to three times my yearly salary.

All of this transpired less than two months after I directly reconnected back with my DAW, and thus, with God. Since then, I have discovered through my students that this kind of miraculous event is not atypical.

However, as wonderful as my first book's sale happened to be, I found myself faced with the daunting dilemma of having to author a book, and I had no logistical idea how to go about doing so. Yet there was one thing that I had become very good at over the last few months, and that was reconnecting with my DAW and listening to God.

I was still working with the Pirates when I began my first book, which meant I was still responsible for working seven days a week for an average of fifteen hours a day. To accommodate my commitment, I got up two hours earlier each morning to write. This simple routine enabled me to complete a manuscript within six months that brought Willie to tears, and which our editor praised as a strong literary work.

It was my second book, though, that allowed me to perfect and understand what I had done so spontaneously with my first work. I was living in a bustling suburb of Pittsburgh at the time. Pittsburgh has a reputation for many things. For those of us who have lived there, the traffic jams created by its many tunnels and bridges were one of the worst.

I make no bones about it: I despise traffic. I realize

that no one likes it, but because I dislike traffic so much more than most, I am willing to do literally anything I can to avoid it. As bad as the traffic is in Pittsburgh during weekday rush hours, it was nearly as bad on the weekends when most people were off work.

So, entering into my second book, I made the decision to test what I had learned by writing only on the weekends, when the traffic in my neighborhood usually came to a standstill. My thinking was that not only would I be able to avoid the traffic I disliked so much, but I would also be able to evaluate what I thought I learned from my first book.

By then I had come to theorize that the reason a person wanted to write had nothing to do with the actual act of writing itself. Instead, a person sought to write because he or she had a divine message in the form of a book—signed, sealed, and delivered inside them—that was trying to get out. The statistic I quoted in the introduction from the article in *The New York Times* attests to that fact.

My tested and well-founded belief also led me to theorize that, because of this divine connection, we should be able to relay these already finished works onto paper in about the same amount of time that it would take us to literally copy down that book.

If my theory was correct, I would be able to capture the entire 80,000-word draft of my second book in twelve days or less, and then revise and perfect that draft in three days or less. My final calculations for how long it would take from start to finish would add

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up to fifteen days, or five three-day weekends.

Much to my delight, creating the formal timeline calmed the concerns and fears of my logical mind, and as a result I was able to give in to the process even more deeply and easily.

Right from the beginning of writing book two, I could tell that I was on to something brilliant. The words began flowing out of me like water spraying from a hose. Even more important was the fact that I loved the way I felt when I wrote. I looked forward so much to writing that I became positively addicted to it.

I zoomed through the writing and revision of my second book, from the first word to the last, in the five consecutive three-day weekends I had allotted. To be able to reach that stage with my book in that short amount of time was an unfathomable high. Little did I know that I would eventually be called to lead other authors to do it as well. I was still reeling from the effects of my excitement as I slipped my manuscript into the mail to the publisher.

However, stagnant time for a writer is the mother of all self-doubt. Sitting idle can cause a mountain of problems, as your mind and all of its worries and fears finally catch back up with you. That is exactly what happened in my case. In a mere few days, my opinion of the experience had completely changed, and I was more than sure I had just made the biggest mistake of my young literary life.

Ten days after I had mailed in the manuscript I could no longer control myself, so I called my publisher

searching for some sort of validation.

To my surprise he not only loved the book, but found so few mistakes that he didn't feel any sort of rewriting was necessary. So, I chose to employ the exact same methods with my third book, which I had been given five months to write. My publisher, Zondervan, was deeply concerned that the deadline was too tight, so I believe that they gave me a larger-than-average advance to compensate for my inconvenience.

I completed that book in a month and a half, but waited the remainder of the five months before I turned it in. I just didn't want to disillusion them. A favorable response was received from them as well.

True to my word, soon after the completion of book one, I began following through on my promise to God to share what I had learned with other aspiring writers. In no time at all, word of my work spread through the local and then national writing communities. Over the next thirty-one years, I gleefully divided my time between writing my next books and making over 4,000 appearances at over 100 colleges and universities.

Then, while standing in front of a packed classroom at the University of Arizona in January 2000, my next revelation came to me as I was overcome with the strangest of feelings. I recognized it as my own DAW coming through.

By that time, I had learned the value of always following the advice of my DAW, which on this occasion was nudging me to steer those in attendance to begin writing their books right then and there, without any

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of the necessary preparatory steps I had employed in the past.

Shortly after, I upgraded my system to directly emulate what I learned could be done that day. Once I implemented the system with my students I began seeing even more clearly the potential of this ultimate connection, as aspiring writers from all ages, beliefs, and backgrounds composed more than 10,000 words per day and completed books and screenplays in as little as two or three weeks.

In fact, the first fifty students with whom I chose to share this program completed over 100 books in one year with no compromises in quality. More importantly, their lives transformed as their biases and fears were removed and replaced by the fulfillment of their dreams and the recognition of their life purpose.

Of course, that is just the beginning of my tale. For later on, further inspirations led me to create the Write Your Book in 90 Days, and then forty-five days, and then thirty days, and then Write Your Book in 8 Days retreat, then the Write Your Book in 5 Days retreat, and then the Write Your Publishable Book in a Weekend retreat.

Amazingly, in each of the above situations I was offering the exact same things. The only thing that changed was the time allotted to the authors I worked with to finish their books. That's it. And the plans associated with the different timeframes I offered all came to me at different times and in the same way—divine inspiration received while I was in my DAW

state working with authors. Yes, looking back, I feel that these descending time periods were the result of a divine inspiration I had received. Those divine inspirations were in response to an ever-expanding consciousness to the God within us all, trying desperately to birth a message and dying to be born through the books many of us feel drawn to write.

What's the secret behind the amazing results I have not only experienced but witnessed firsthand? Reconnecting and then remaining connected to God, both as a writer and as a human being, and then allowing one's DAW to express itself through the books so many of us are compelled to write.