

STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus n. an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,
used by the ancients for writing

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW **Lessons from the Pacific Northwest Writers Conference**

by Nina Durfee

It's no secret I'm writing a book. It's nonfiction, and the industry will probably stick it in the "inspirational" category, but I like to think of it is "spiritual how-to." More on the book details below.

In July I attended the Pacific Northwest Writers Conference, an annual event to learn, connect, rub shoulders and hobnob with educators, writers, authors (yes, there's a difference between writers and authors) and the ever-mysterious and wise editors, agents and publishing gods. Several years ago I attended this same conference to pitch my third mystery novel. My experiences in these two conferences were very different.

Then

At the 2003 conference I was shy, eager, afraid, hopeful, nervous, pretentious and unpolished. I was desperate to make an impression and a sale, without a clue what that should look like. I drew on my theatrical experience and dressed in a character I didn't fully believe in, aloof on the surface and fiercely dependent and frightened on the inside. When my mouth wasn't clamped shut, my voice shook and I felt unworthy. I cowered at the thought of rejection.

Now

This year I attended as a volunteer, which helped me get out of my shell, gave me a

reason to initiate conversation, and naturally increased my visibility. I viewed the “royalty” as my equal and made no pretense to be anything or anyone other than who I am. I was interested and curious, hopeful, independent, in charge of me. I was honest with myself as to my talent, expertise and ability, and I was honest with others. I was humble (to the degree I’m capable of that) and open to learn.

The Key Difference

The biggest difference between Then and Now was my **intention and expectation**. Then, I had no clear intention, and on some unspoken level I expected to remain the lowly, inferior creature I’d always recognized myself to be. This time, I specifically set my intention prior to the conference: to acknowledge the value of my work and my authority and expertise to write it, to be helpful to others, to connect, listen and learn.

My pre-set intentions floated in my subconscious for the 4-day duration of the event, and by golly if my expectations weren’t met! I connected with wonderful writers who attentively listened to my pitch and gave honest response. I got everything from dazed looks of confusion to “Wow, I want to read that!”

I boldly changed appointments or elbowed my way in to see specific editors and agents. I collected and handed out business cards. I breakfasted with authors who told me their stories face to face, and I bought their books and accepted their autographs. I listened eagerly to a range of presenters and chased down handouts for sessions I missed. I boldly left the room when my eyes glazed over or a speaker failed to keep me riveted. I flagged down people and requested post-conference follow-up.

My most valuable intentions were to (1) level the playing field and (2) be open to the learning. That allowed me to speak to agents and editors on a person-to-person basis as opposed to person-to-god(dess). When an editor told me my work wouldn’t fit her publishing house, rather than exit with my tail between my legs, I asked for suggestions for a better fit. She jotted a list - amazing what happens when you simply ask for what you want!

I viewed lofty-titled people as no different from me, knowing that they, too, deal with lost car keys, jet lag, family crises, and overflowing toilets in the midst of running their lives and their businesses. This perspective enabled me to learn from

their critique rather than feel judged by it.

My Biggest Learning

We're all different, and each valuable in our own right. In the space of 24 hours, I heard from an editor that I had a strong platform and from an agent that my platform was wimpy. (More on "platform" below.) This allowed me to come home not in dejected humility but with purpose to find the right match for me.

Relationships and connections are important in life and in business. Connections expand our options, but connecting is only the first step. Follow-through comes next. I choose not to waste my time trying to convince someone who doesn't relate to me or my product or service. Instead, I will follow up with those I found easy to talk to and those who offered positive feedback, and I'll check out new avenues of potential.

I am confident my book has merit, value and purpose. I also know it's not for everyone. But a segment of population clamors for my message, and I intend to reach them with information and techniques to help them realize their dreams.

Platform

Platform is the big buzz in the publishing industry. Platform is, essentially, audience - who do you know and who can you reach? If you're reading this article, you're part of my platform. When you share this information or my website with others, you extend my platform. My personal networks, list serves, business connections, workshops I facilitate, clients and their extended sphere of influence, co-workers, industry presentations, published articles and aired interviews all add heft to my platform.

If you know an individual or a group who may take interest in what I do as a life coach, a writer's coach or a meditation instructor, please put them in touch with me. The wider my platform, the sooner my book will hit the shelves!

MY BOOK: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Full Bloom: 7 Practical Steps to Joyfully Realize Your Dream, + 1 to Grow On, provides practical application for people seeking fulfillment in personal or business

life. Perhaps you've heard of Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* (28 weeks on the New York Times Best-Seller List). *The Secret* eloquently sets out three simple steps of the "Law of Attraction," a mysterious phenomenon based on rules of the Universe - all very inspiring and, for some, just out of practical reach. *Full Bloom* tames the woo-woo factor by putting faith in the self, solidifying the abstract wisdom into practical, concrete action steps.

The premise:

Before we can have, we must do.

Before we can do, we must think.

Before we can think, we must be.

Interspersed among these critical elements are other practical steps to hasten the process of intentional manifestation of desire.

Each stage of the process is addressed in a separate chapter containing hands-on exercises to deepen the learning and move the reader forward. The final chapter ties it together with a hint to perpetuate the process.

YOUR INPUT, PLEASE

If you would like an opportunity to test the principles on your own unrealized dream, shoot me an email at lifesculpt@gmail.com or call me at (503-932-7407) to arrange a private or group workshop.

I welcome your comments and questions about the subject matter, and I invite your input as to what has worked or not worked for you in getting what you want. Please email me with your queries, comments or stories: lifesculpt@gmail.com. Who knows, you may appear in my book as a case study - with your permission, of course!