

## **A conversation with the author:**

### ***Who are your favorite authors?***

“One favorite is Og Mandino, who wrote “Greatest Salesman in the World,” and many others that sold over 13 million copies. He really knows how to keep you turning the pages. I like reading Tom Creighton, Stephen Coontz, Mario Puzo, Tom Clancy, Ken Follett, Larry McMurtry and a variety of others. I’ve also read my wife’s favorites, Sandra Brown and Danielle Steel.”

### ***Romance novels?***

“Okay, let’s level set here. I read romance novels because I didn’t quiet know what to say in love scenes. So I went to the experts for advice.”

### ***Most of your favorites write mystery-suspense genre, why do you like Larry McMurtry?***

“The manuscript I’m working on now is a real life story written as fiction. I suspect McMurtry does some of this, and obviously, he does it well. I like seeing the different styles, then refining my own for a particular project.”

### ***What are your concerns regarding writing about the people in your life? Are you anxious about what they will think?***

“I’m very sensitive about writing true stories with real names. Problem is, your perception of events may be totally different from theirs. So, as a cop-out, I’m writing fiction, suspense genre. That way, I don’t have to use real names and absolute facts. I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings nor do I want a lawsuit! I can use composite characters, modified settings, and shape events the way I feel necessary.”

### ***Why do you like writing fiction?***

“I like writing fiction because it’s fun. It gives me freedom to express myself. More importantly, I like entertaining readers, and fiction gives you the flexibility to do this. Unfortunately, I started writing late in life, so I have a lot to do before I checkout.”

### ***Some readers get bored very quickly. How do you know when you’ve written too much slow-going description and not enough action?***

“I know I may have written too much description when I go beyond three sentences of pure exposition. Or, as I read my work, when I sense the need for either action or dialogue. Balance is key. I try to give just enough so the reader can visualize the setting, an object, the subject character and move on to action or dialogue.”

***How do you determine what is an important or relevant trait when writing about a character?***

“Personal traits vary widely. The trick is to know what the reader will find relevant and interesting, while moving towards the plot. External and internal traits should give readers insight, to prepare them for the climax. For example, I don’t think anyone would care to know that I used a stuffed sock as a football when I was a kid. But if it were relevant to the story, it may be interesting and connective to the plot.”

***What activities can you think of to improve your dialogue writing skills?***

“Listen, listen, listen, and I can’t emphasize enough, listen and take notes. A good listener will remember passages, phrases and the gist of a conversation. I also try to note what I call ‘habitual clichés’ that usually match the person that uses them. Here’s a few: ‘You know,’ ‘Here’s the deal,’ ‘Understand?’ ‘Know what I mean?’ ‘Exactly,’ ‘You bet, and so on

“By the way, I confess. I also make note of good dialogue in movies. But I don’t use them in the same context and never in totality. I blend bits and pieces in with dialogue if and when they fit. The building blocks of a character are thoughts, actions, external traits and speech. Surround this with a scene and a plot and you’ve got a story.”