

### ***Introduction:***

*Greetings, this is the first of many monthly website updates that will highlight and discuss the various mechanics of writing and cover the multiple aspects of publishing. You'll have the convenience of reading or printing it at your leisure. The series will be: **The Art of Writing** I'll include a feedback and Q&A section as the series fully develops. Again, thanks for subscribing.*

### ***The Art of Writing:***

#### *Building Your Character: part 1-The Power Of Observation*

How many times have you sat looking at your computer screen or paper pad thinking of how do I create this incredible character(s) that everyone is going to just fall head over heels for? Well, first things are first. Depending on the story you're writing, whether straight fiction, sci-fi or a romance. The first order of your character is to make this person(s) feel "real" to the reader. We can all write the physical description of our character, but setting that aside, what motivates your character? What makes your character angry? What makes them vindictive? A character exists in your mind and your job as a writer is to make them come alive through your writing.

As we progress in our story telling, your character will need to grow and expand, as we do in real life. The reader can relate to a character going through a situation if they have come to know the internal workings of that character. A good way to formulate characters is decide if this character is a main or sub-actor of your story. Main characters obviously will have more nuances devoted to them than a character that is a passerby. Observation is a fun thing. You can see how we as people interact with each other and those around us. One way I practice observation is while out in about with my wife and two boys. Going shopping is an adventure in and of it self. But as a writer, I observe how others act around me. How many times have we seen the crying child in a shopping cart wanting a toy or candy? How many times have you watched someone trying to make a decision on buying something. The list goes on....and on....How does this relate to building our character? Well, by observation of what others do, body language and mood swings, we can interchange our character(s) responses in a way that does not bog down the reader with specific details. Subtleties add to the overall characters persona and how they interact in their world you create. A good source of human behavior is simple observation it doesn't cost you anything, except time. Secondly, your character must have weaknesses. Does that mean your character needs a hug every few minutes?

Building your character: The power of observation  
By Don Bradshaw

No! But, if your character is facing down a thousands bullets and does not react to them, than he / she needs emotional depth. I use this example because we all watch those action movies where everyone is shooting or blowing things up and the main character goes around, taking them out. In the real world, as in our make believe world, what ever the harsh situation that your character thrusts themselves in, you must give them some sort of emotional conflict while dealing with the situation around them. Fear is a great motivator for action. Especially, when your character, in the face of danger or their own fear, can summon the courage to overcome the situation. That makes for entertaining reading. Thirdly, give your character some humor. Even Joe Friday smiled once in awhile. Your character is yours alone. You know them inside and out. When you begin your story, and as you progress, build your character along the way. Don't give the reader too much at first, let them build the dynamics in their mind as they read your story. In the end, you'll have a character that will be "real" and "compelling" to the reader that will make them want to read more.

Next Month: June, 2008

Building Your Character: part 2 - Character Cards - what are they? Why do you them?