

This is a true story. It was written for a writing contest. The call of the contest was: Why create? Why write? The word limit was 250 words. This came in at 249.

It won.

And: I can point to it and say "This is art. I created it."

Keep Writing

(A True Story)

©2014, 2023 Mitchell L. Silverman

1990. Three months after he told me he was sick, my father died of AIDS. We were just starting to connect—after he walked out on my mom.

1993. My college thesis. I couldn't find a topic that would stick in my distracted brain. My dad's death—that story held my attention. But was it academic enough? As Mac Miller, my thesis advisor, said: "Write from the heart, and use both hands."

Under Mac's wing, my thesis took me a year and a half. Its title, "Anything but Herpes I Can Cure," was my lab-coated urologist father's birds-and-bees advice to me.

Writing that thesis helped me.

2004. Mac, surrogate academic father, retires. My father-in-law, dear to me, sick—I almost missed Mac's retirement roast. I wrote—about my dad, my father-in-law, and Mac—in a white heat. The best speech, I was told.

Writing it helped.

2006, New York. My wife and I, at Lincoln Center. Memories from 1994: I saw Spalding Gray perform there, and met him. His work helped shape my thesis. A happy, sad memory, I wrote when we visited. Happy: He got my thesis. Sad: I hadn't followed his advice: "Keep writing."

Now, I am writing. Some blogging, keeping a journal, an occasional screed, a magazine article. (And this.) Life gets better—much. And—pain recedes.

My father-in-law died of pancreatic cancer. My father died of AIDS. Spalding Gray killed himself. And me? I keep writing.