

# The Writer's Office

The writer's office is his "Fortress of Solitude," it's his personal "Holy of Holies," it's a writer's most sacred space, the only place where he has full control over the universe and he will do almost anything to protect it and be in it.

When the door is locked, it means fabulous and magical things are happening – with a stroke of a pen or the tap-tappity-tap on a keyboard, entire lives are breathed into being, whole worlds are brought into existence, adventures are begun and fates are decided on a mythological chess board of the imagination. Love is requited, lost, then requited again –perhaps? Mysteries and crimes are revealed, investigated then solved, evil is faced down, wrongs are righted, heroes are born, basic human truths are made evident and lies are turned into truth. The patently unbelievable is made wholly believable here in a writer's office, if the writer is on his game.

Some writers don't need an office to properly perform their magic, they can take their laptops for a ride on a roller coaster during a thunderstorm and write a decent line of prose. I respect these writers, but I learned at a very young age that I wasn't one of them. I need the warm, private, quiet walls and the locked door of an insulating womb to protect me from the distractions of a very noisy and intrusive outside world.

So it was for me in the summer of 1981 when my friend, Larry, also an aspiring writer at the time, and I decided we needed our own "Fortress of Solitude" to practice our craft. We were two fourteen year-olds possessing young, nuclear-powered minds pregnant with incredible worlds, fantastic characters and amazing stories and these minds needed an outlet. But where would this "Fortress of Solitude" reside?

My basement in the house on Woodbine Drive in Round Lake Beach, Illinois, of course!

There was a section of linoleum-tiled floor against the back, west wall of my basement that had remained untouched since the day my father paneled the walls with the strangest dark blue wooden paneling back in 1973. In the middle of this wall was a single, small window that gave a worm's eye-view of my backyard. This was the perfect space for our office. It was well away from the living area of the basement that had a giant 26" console TV, and it would offer the perfect amount of privacy once the inner wall went up. I told our plans to my dad and he gave us permission to build, as long as we did it ourselves. He didn't want to be bothered with it. The game was on!

With the youthful energy of kids that desired something desperately, Larry and I tore down that awful, early 70's blue paneling, painted the drywall underneath white, framed out the window, hung a wooden blind, built the skeletal frame of the opposing wall, ran electric (with the help of Larry's dad), nailed drywall over the frame, painted that white then hung a door with a lock in the knob. It was a simple 10'x10' room and took about two weeks to complete.

Our parents gave us a pair of cheap, crappy desks and we placed them against the north and south walls so that they faced the door. Our parents also gave us cheap, crappy office chairs on rollers (mine was missing a roller so I had to learn how to balance while sitting in it). There was an overhead light that you could turn on with a switch by the door but someone gave us novelty lamps for each of our desks, mine was made out of a 7-Up can, Larry's was made out of a Budweiser can (to this day I don't know why those were given to us because we didn't drink either beverage). Larry's dad built us a small, waist-high bookcase to store our comic books. We needed music to serve as mood inducers as we wrote, so I brought in a boom box, put it on top of the bookcase and tuned the FM radio to 97.9 The Loop, but it wasn't long before hundreds of cassette tapes littered the top of the bookcase like discarded cigarette packs – John Mellencamp (when he was known as John Cougar), every Led Zeppelin album, 38 Special, ZZ Top, Rush, AC/DC, The Police and more!

We hung posters on the walls. Larry had a confederate flag hanging on the wall behind him because his family was from the south and he was proud of his heritage. I have a feeling if he tried that today he'd be tarred and feathered on CNN and his house burned down. I hung pieces of art I produced (yes, I was an artist, too! I drew and colored all the covers of the many books Larry and I wrote in that little room). Larry and I were so proud of ourselves. The day we finished moving in, we sat at our desks and realized we had to name the office something other than "The Office." We came up with "Adventure Stories, Inc." and even authored a silly constitution of laws to govern our time in there. One of the laws was that only rock and blues music was allowed to be played in the office. I still have this constitution in a desk drawer in my present office (check it out at the end of this WebEssay – just click on the thumbnail).

In this office, I learned the writing habits I still cherish to this day. In this office, I transported myself to countless planets in many different times with too many characters to name. In this office, I wrote poetry, sword and sorcery, fantasy, science fiction. I drew book covers and comic books - there were no barriers, no borders on my creativity back then. In this office, the outside world ceased to exist as soon as I closed and locked the door and put a cassette tape in the boom box.

On Friday or Saturday nights, Larry would sleep over and we'd spend the entire night at our desks drinking huge glasses of hot tea while we wrote and jammed. We'd discuss our current stories and ones we'd like to start. We'd talk about girls, music or what happened in school the

previous week. On our birthdays, we'd have parties in the office with our friends. It was the best time ever, I can't remember ever feeling so creative.

But as is often the case, Life happens, gets in the way and things change. Girls, cars and work became Larry's interests, then he joined the Air Force and our partnership in "Adventure Stories, Inc." officially ceased to be.

I've had five offices since then, all bigger and nicer, but if I had a time machine, the first place I would go would be back to that first office on Woodbine Drive in Round lake beach, Illinois, just to spend one more night there jamming and writing silly sci-fi stories no one will ever read.

Thanks for your time,  
GC Rosenquist