

PageOneLit.com: Where did you grow up and was reading and writing a part of your life?

I was born in the Bronx and, with the exception of three pre-school years in Toronto, Canada, was raised in a Westchester county suburb of New York City. Reading and writing became a part of my life, along with 'rithmetic and all the other stuff they taught in school. I liked math most at first, but when we got to logarithms, they scared the hell out of me. Writing appeared to be among my better options for trying to earn a living.

PageOneLit.com: Who were your earliest influences and why?

My mother and father because they fed me, clothed me, and kept me safe and warm; and my Uncle Danny because he taught me and my siblings the importance of a good pillow fight. If you have to get physical to resolve differences, pillows are the perfect weapons.

PageOneLit.com: Why do you write?

I don't dance without a couple of drinks, and I can't sing or draw. But I could always string written words together and had a pretty fair imagination. I eventually gravitated to newspapers, but there is only so much you can do creatively as a reporter. I think if I had become a columnist, I never would have written fiction. You can get your views on things out in a column in ways that are more creative than reporting routine, hard news or writing features. Fiction allows for imagination, creative, and self-expression. The only downside is that while it can be fun and satisfying, it's a lot harder than most types of writing, and certainly more difficult than it appears. Kind of like a good golf swing, which, if done well appears so effortless and simple, but is anything but. I went to a book reading recently. The author does both fiction and non-fiction. She said when she begins hearing her muse, she immediately prays aloud, "Please God, don't let it be another novel."

PageOneLit.com: Who is Col. Ellis Ellis?

A figment of my imagination, I hope, or my publisher and I will need a good lawyer. As a fictional character, he represents anyone who is reflective enough to periodically question what is, to the extent it's been lived, the sum of their life. And maybe take time to listen closely to their conscience, not just turn up the volume in other areas so they can ignore it. Most people in that position have to change their internal selves to effect change or personal growth. Ellis feels compelled to change himself, but in the process gets to change the events that helped form him as a person and shape some of the world around him.

PageOneLit.com: Your new book, "Twice Upon A Time", deals with 'TIME TRAVEL' which has been a science fiction staple. Your main character goes back in time to early 1970, a time shaped by the events of the late '60s - Two questions: How did you decide to send Col. E. Adam Ellis back in time by way of a storm and why did you select 1970?

I chose a setting and a storm to be my time machine. It was a lot easier than building one and far more convincing than proving to readers I could. Storms already have a reputation for messing with our lives. The way the media reports on the possibility of a winter storm, for example, almost gives the simple snowflake superpowers. Mountains have a kind of mystical quality to them; and they're a great literary image. Combine the two and the implausible becomes believable, so long as the reader has at least some willingness to suspend his or her disbelief. Why the '60s? I'm thinking probably because I liked the music and hated the war. More importantly, from a time travel perspective, they fit the time frame.

PageOneLit.com: If you could go back in time - What year and why?

Nov. 2, 1963: Because it would be easier to prevent the Kennedy assassination than going back a few more years and trying to keep the Dodgers from moving to LA.

PageOneLit.com: "Twice Upon A Time" deals with the past and the present, but ironically flirts with the future. Your plot's story begins with the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom -- Did you sketch your plot or did the story write itself. Why did you begin at the end of the war rather than in present day?

Operation Iraqi Freedom is over? I guess I missed that. But if it is, hip, hip, hooray!!! And I mean that with far greater sincerity than anything I have to say about writing. As for the concept of sketching vs. something writing itself, I don't want to be the next guy to sing the "Writing is Hard Blues." That tune is just one big cliché. It's a cliché, however, because it's true. Nothing writes itself. I didn't sketch it either. Like I said before, I can't draw. But at times I can scribble a pretty fair plot line. I think that's the thread from which you can spin a good yarn. A novel is just a lot of good yarn knitted together well. Now ask me about knitting and I'll gladly tell you how difficult it is for me to do – but can be fun too, I hear.

The book was originally written (by me not itself) after the start of the first Gulf War during the administration of Pres. George Bush the Elder. I was too busy working and raising my kids to effectively find an agent or publisher. Ten years later, my kids were raised and Emperor George W. Bush the Lesser started this most recent insanity. I updated the book and had much more time and better luck finding a publisher. The May-December Romance element became more a March-December thing, but still works.

PageOneLit.com: What is it about the science fiction genre you enjoy?

I like a lot of what we label science fiction, but don't like labels in general and Science fiction is one I don't like specifically. Primarily because some people (usually those who tend to think they're more intellectually evolved than others) turn up their noses to anything called science fiction. Their selective vision can't see past the high-functioning robots, advanced gizmos, complex wow-machinery, intergalactic incidents, etc., etc., etc. There are all kinds of good fiction out there, good and bad, including what we call science fiction. Some of it draws more on science than fiction; some of it the other way around. Some throws in a range of fantasy. This book takes a bit of science and a touch of fantasy, twists them together to stand things on end, altering reality just enough to make for a good tale -- sort of what Vonnegut did so well. (So getting back to an earlier question, I guess you could call him an influence along with Mom, Dad, and Uncle Danny.) Science fiction, historical fiction, literary fiction, any fiction is an evolving thing, and generally more evolved than some people who would routinely dismiss one form of it over another. When *Slaughterhouse Five* came out, it was put in the science fiction section of the local bookstore. Today it is usually found in the literary fiction section, never too far from the newspapers, magazines, coffee, and desserts. Now, if you want me to come up with an in-between, classy label for it, I'll need a little more time. Brunch wasn't built in day.

PageOneLit.com: Does "Twice Upon A Time" have a political statement? A personal statement? What do you hope readers will say after reading your book?

The personal and political statement are one and the same and a little derivative: What this country needs is good five-percent alternative to war. After reading the book, I hope readers will say, "Hmmmmm." After that, it's about what they think and do.

PageOneLit.com: What did you learn from writing "Twice Upon A Time"?

Something I would like to share with everyone. I learned: You know, you never know.

PageOneLit.com: What's next?

As far as writing goes, the working title is *A Cure From Cancer; The Second Coming*. It has nothing to do with curing the disease or the return of Jesus. Not yet, anyway. But, you know, you never know. As far as everything else goes, I have no idea what's next. I just hope that as a species, we humans learn to do it better and with far less violence and aggression than we're doing it now.

PageOneLit.com: What was the last book you read?

I tend to juggle two or three at a time and, over more time than I'll admit, finish about two out of three. The one I'm deepest into now is Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present*. I can't remember for sure the title of the last one I finished. I just hope, given the fragility of life, it wasn't the last one I'll ever finish.