

## **It's Never Too Late Unless You're Dead**

### **Worse than not succeeding is not trying at all.**

I'm sixty-six years old and trying to launch a career as a writer.

Actually, that's not quite true.

I am sixty-six years old, but I've been a professional writer my whole career. I was an advertising copywriter and creative director at several global agencies for twenty-five years and I've been an independent marketing and communications writer for ten.

But I'm launching a career as a novel writer now because of Mike Koelker.

Mike was the creative director on the Levi's account at Foote, Cone & Belding in the 70s and 80s. That was the hottest account in town and Mike was the hottest creative director. As the VP of Worldwide Marketing at Levi's once told me – and it was after several drinks at Reno's, so I know it was true – “If Mike Koelker leaves FCB, Levi's leaves FCB.”

Mike also gave me my first break. He referred me to Ron Berman, who was creative director of the office, and Ron eventually hired me. I was lucky.

But what I still remember vividly was sitting in Mike's office one day, talking about creative stuff like we always did, and some account executive, trying to kiss up I figured, asked, “Mike, you're such a great writer, why haven't you written a novel?”

Without hesitating he responded, “Because I guess I have nothing to say.”

That was sad, I thought, even at the time, because I bet Mike had plenty to say. He's gone now, so we'll never know.

But that stuck with me and made me wonder throughout my own career if I was similarly afflicted, that I had nothing to say. Even before I got into advertising, I wrote a novel. I sent it around to agents and publishers. And they all sent it back. Years later I reread it and realized they were right: It was bad.

That's actually what propelled me into advertising. Having failed at my first novel – so easily dissuaded! – and then having written a play and a screenplay, both of which suffered the same fate – I pitched myself to the ad world. And I got in. And I loved it! So I didn't worry about whether I had anything to say — I was getting paid to write.

But I'm older now than Mike was when he died, and I think I finally have something to say.

So with that as a basis, I'm "starting over" at sixty-six.

Actually, that's not quite true either.

I actually started over about three years ago. I wrote a screenplay called *Cenote*. I pitched it to Kerry McCluggage, I pitched it to Tony Bill, I pitched it to Charlie Meeker. No, no, no.

So I rewrote it as a novel. And I queried agents about it. And they all rejected it. So I rewrote it. More queries. More rejections. More rewrites. Queries-rejections-rewrite. It was a nice dependable pattern in my life.

And in the process of writing *Cenote*, I discovered that the story is actually a trilogy. So I've already written the second book in the series, called *Primrose*, and I'm working on the third, called *Eden*.

But while these books bubble to the surface, I thought I'd start this blog.

Because I think I have something to say.

Maybe you do, too. Post a reply, ask a question, let me know what you think. Maybe you write, maybe you paint or sculpt or take photographs or do music or weave baskets — whatever you do, just as a joy shared is twice a joy and a sorrow shared is half a sorrow, a dream shared has a better chance of becoming more than a dream.

Because I think a dream, any dream – even if it seems distant and unreachable and unrealistic – I think that dream deserves a chance to struggle and squirm and fight its way into existence.

Because a dream is a gift. It's a fragile, magical thing that can carry us away and let us soar.

I don't care how old you are, if you have a dream, it's worth the effort to try to see it come to life. Because it's never too late. Unless you're dead. Mike taught me that.