



## Self-taught author rockin' and rollin' through literary world

By Michael Haskins

Dale Dapkin is a prize-winning short story writer who has spent the winters in Key West for years. Absolutely Amazing Books will be releasing Dale's short story collection soon. He has another book ready too, but we'll let him tell it in his own words.

**Q: You won the Lorian Hemingway Short Story contest twice. Are the stories included in your book, "Prize Winners"?**

**A:** I wrote "Alpaca Potato" that won the Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition in 1999. That's the first story in "Prize Winners." My other Hemingway Prize winner in 2000 – "Church of the Bunny" – is included in my collection called "Prize Winner Stew with Small Dogs" (Steven King's favorite) to be released soon. Others have won money prizes in *Writer's Digest* and other magazines and contests.

**Q: Do you still enter the contest?**

**A:** I would love to but I am not allowed to come anywhere near the contest with a story. After I won twice the "Dale Rule" was instituted where a writer cannot enter if he or she has won before. The Lorian/Dale rule is a good rule. We could go on and on until either Lorain or I die. Why would anyone beside me enter?

**Q: What genre do your stories fall in? Why?**



Contributed

*Quite possibly, Dale Dapkin is naked in this photo.*

**A:** I am the father of the genre "social science fiction." Social science fiction is NOT cocktail parties aboard UFOs. It's exploring the nether wormholes of family interaction ... going down rabbit holes chasing the motivation behind family history. Social science fiction is making sense (or nonsense) of the way our brains deal with the results of clashing reality, memory, and emotion. It's re-examining one's past only to discover what we thought was happening was not what was happening at all. . .but some dark force only hindsight and creativity are now able to shine light on. It's this writer's attempt to explain past history with stories only to discover that my made-to-order fiction is, in fact, what really happened. It's the Rod Sterling, Dr. Phil, and Jerry Springer show, all directed by a part of my brain that ordinarily deals in dreams.

**Q: When did you begin writing short stories? Do you have any formal training in writing?**

**A:** I have no formal training. I am self-taught from the gecko. I like to make myself laugh. I encourage everyone to write just to unite the various warring factions running wild up in the brain. For me, writing is a form of brain organization for my most valuable ideas ... ideas which are scattered and hard to catch. If I'm lucky I'll hold down my dreams long enough to examine them, tag, and release.

**Q: Why are you writing short stories and not novels?**

**A:** In fact, I have written a novel, "American Broccoli and Dr. Breast," published back in the '80s and will publish my first crime/mystery novel "The Art Thief" soon.

**Q: Tell us about a few of the stories in "Prize Winner."**

**A:** First off, I've lived a charmed life from attending Valley Forge Military Academy in the early '60s (J.D. Salinger) to living in Turkey 10 years later during the Vietnam war where I lived and taught school in a 14th century village to a year in Aix en Provence, France. I lived the hippie dream life. I grew up in a crazy Lithuanian /Swedish family with potato pancake Uncles. Later when I told my stories at parties people said, "Man. You got to write that stuff down!"

I had the luck to take the route less taken — to travel, to dare — and all along the way there were stories. But more than anything I told stories that made friends laugh. All my stories are "sort of true." By the way, I had the great fortune to get a sweet scholarship to the Key West Literary Seminar on Historical fiction two years ago. Wow! What an eye opener! Turns out that all writing is, in essence, historical fiction: facts mixed with fictional stuffing make an interesting story. Especially memoirs! Most of my stories are mixed-memoirs. Truth spiced with fiction.

**Q: Do you write from notes, an outline or some other style? Or does each story come about differently?**

**A:** I let the muse take me with my short stories. I'll sit at my computer and write for hours – writing the best and most insightful story I've ever written. Next day I'll open it up and find it reads like a monkey tapped it out with one finger. That's where the real writing starts, cleaning it up: eliminating the 20 percent of just plain bad writing, throwing out the 12 percent of bad jokes and erasing 15 percent of the unbelievable clap-trap. I have to find the real beginning of the story and craft the end. For novels I rely on an outline. When I was younger my brain could hold all the elements together. No more.

**Q: What is your writing schedule?**

**A:** Great question. When I started writing the process was actually painful. I wanted desperately to get to the end. A writer friend gave me great advice. He said, "Set aside time when you are not tired, not stressed, not distracted and PROMISE yourself you will write for just five minutes a day. YOU MUST WRITE those five minutes. Anything after that is gravy." Now I love to write. I can sit at my computer and lose time. I'll think a half hour has passed and it's been five hours. Someone said there is no writing, only re-writing! That's what I do all day is re-write toward perfection! I work and stretch and twist, trying to tie everything together. I see the connections to my ideas and my beliefs and squeeze meaning from them like oranges. All those voices living up inside my head, my parents, my friends, old girlfriends, critics ... they're my biggest fans.

**Q: Do you find Key West a good place to write? Why?**

**A:** Key West is great. I can write naked. I can go play beach volleyball with Lola. I have two stiff drinks at 6 p.m. and then write some very good stuff, but not great because the alcohol enables crazy. Later I take a break to walk around the block.

**Q: Where can our readers find out more about you and buy your book?**

**A:** They should, by all means, go to [absoluteluyamazinge-books.com](http://absoluteluyamazinge-books.com)