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[Author Enjoys A Do-Over](#)



Tribune photo by JAY CONNER

Debora Coty, author of *The Distant Shore* and *"Billowing Sails,"* says she felt a spark inside that led her to write.

By **DEBORA M. COTY**

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Remember the scene in the movie "City Slickers," when Billy Crystal's character suggests to his despondent friend that, just like the "do-overs" in their childhood baseball games, maybe it's time for a "do-over" of life itself?

Many of us, whether it's due to life's unexpected changes, altered employment status, or just plain discontent, find ourselves in the liver-quivering position of facing a Life Do-Over. How do we find the courage to confront and defeat all the obstacles blocking our path? To swing our bat with bases loaded and a full count?

My Life Do-Over began in a dentist's waiting room in 2002 at the ripe age of 45. My youngest chick had just flown the coop and I was winding up simultaneous careers as an occupational therapist and piano teacher. For months, I had been groping in the darkness concerning plans for my future. As I flipped open a magazine, an ad for a writer's contest jumped out at me. A flame suddenly ignited inside my chest.

Writing? Me? Dare I take the risk? Well, why not? It had been something I'd dreamed of doing since I was a child. As a voracious teen reader, "Christy" by [Catherine Marshall](#) had a huge impact on my life (I read it nine times and later named my daughter - can you guess? Christy!). I had always wanted to touch someone's heart and faith the way "Christy" touched mine. Alas, life, as life tends to do, intervened and college, marriage, career and babies back-burnered my dream.

But that day in the dentist's office, I heard the still, small voice of God whisper, "It's time." After embedding a few new calluses into my prayer knees, I knew in my heart of hearts that this was the direction I should take.

But there was one minor problem. I didn't know how to write. It had been 30 years since high school English class and I didn't know a dangling participle from a dip wad. But I told myself, "God is God. The Great Mover and Shaker. If He wills it, He fulfills it. After all, He made a sheep-herder King David and a prostitute the ancestor of the Savior of the World Rahab. I reckon He can create a writer from thin air if He wants to."

So I studied every "how to" I could get my hands on and gave myself a crash course in grammar, style and punctuation. I didn't win the writing contest. Nope, I didn't even place. But instead of being extinguished, the flame within only burned brighter. I would just have to work harder.

I found an experienced writing mentor (a friend of a friend) in the inspirational magazine genre and we met for lattes at a coffee shop monthly to share writer's guidelines, leads and writing tips. My shoebox of rejections overflowed but I kept writing. It was because of her patient guidance that I was blessed with 10 published articles that first year and now have more than 80 articles appearing in magazines, newspapers, anthologies and trade journals.

Using Humor To Talk About Faith

During the next five years, two inspirational historical novels followed, based on the adventurous true story of a young girl's incredible journey of faith on remote, untamed Merritt Island in 1904: "[*The Distant Shore*](#)," which jumped to No. 2 on the VRPublishing best-seller list within four months of its 2007 release, and the sequel, "[*Billowing Sails*](#)" (released Dec. 8). Barbour Books contracted me to contribute chapters to four devotionals and "[*Heavenly Humor for the Women's Soul*](#)," a compilation of short stories by inspirational humorists such as Women of Faith veterans Patsy Clairmont and Anita Renfroe.

People often ask me what I write about and how I get my ideas. The answer is simple, really. I've been blessed with a wacky sense of humor and a burning desire to share with others that faith is a living, breathing, 24/7 relationship with our Creator who wants to communicate with us by walking, talking and scraping peanut butter out of the carpet right alongside us. Our Father has an amazing sense of humor! Humor is God's catalyst for releasing joy into our souls! And He wants us to be filled with His joy, not weighted down by the joy-sucking dully-funks. This theme infuses my upcoming Mother's Day release, "*Mom Needs Chocolate: Hugs, Humor and Hope for Surviving Motherhood*," (Regal, March 2009).

[*"Mom Needs Chocolate"*](#) is the story of my life couched in humor; faith lived out in real life. I've had my share of disasters, disappointments and depression, which I share candidly in the book. That includes jobs that didn't materialize, financial losses, family

deaths, prolonged illness and a two-year depression related to six devastating miscarriages. But through God's grace, like the psalmist, I've learned, "*Oh, the joys of those who put their trust in Him!*" (Psalm 2:12).

What's Next? I Don't Know

New doors continue to open in my Debbie Do-Over adventure. One has led to conducting writers workshops to help others take that first step and persevere through their own writing journeys. I co-wrote "Grit for the Oyster: 250 Pearls of Wisdom for Aspiring Writers" as a powerful motivator offering wit, wisdom and pithy practical guidance from scores of successful writers.

Next up? I don't really know. But that's part of the fun! I do know that in 2009, I'll be teaching workshops at two state writers conferences and one locally in November (with the [Hillsborough Inspirational Writers Workshop](#)). I'll also be leading free writers mini-workshops at bookstores and public libraries across Tampa and am excited that my inspirational speaking invitations are exploding. I'm currently scheduling Choc-Out (chocolate) parties in conjunction with the release of "Mom Needs Chocolate" and look forward to meeting lots of new friends this year.

So what about you? Are you or is someone you love facing a Life Do-Over in 2009? My advice is to create new creases in your prayer knees, target the occupation to which God leads you, do your homework and embrace the opportunity. Now take a deep breath, step up to the plate and knock a grand slam!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debora Coty, a tennis addict and devoted mother of two, lives and laughs in Seffner with her husband, Chuck, and desperately wicked pooch, Fenway. Her books are available through [Amazon.com](#), [Target.com](#), [Barnesandnoble.com](#), and many bookstores (signed copies available via her Web site). Visit www.DeboraCoty.com to sign up for her free newsletter, schedule speaking events, learn about writing workshops and book releases, or just swap howdy's.

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