

Enumclaw authors explain how to write (and make money doing it)

By Ray Miller-Still
Editor

They call it “pulp speed” — writing at least 1 million words a year. That’s an average of 84,000 words a month, or 2,750 words a day.

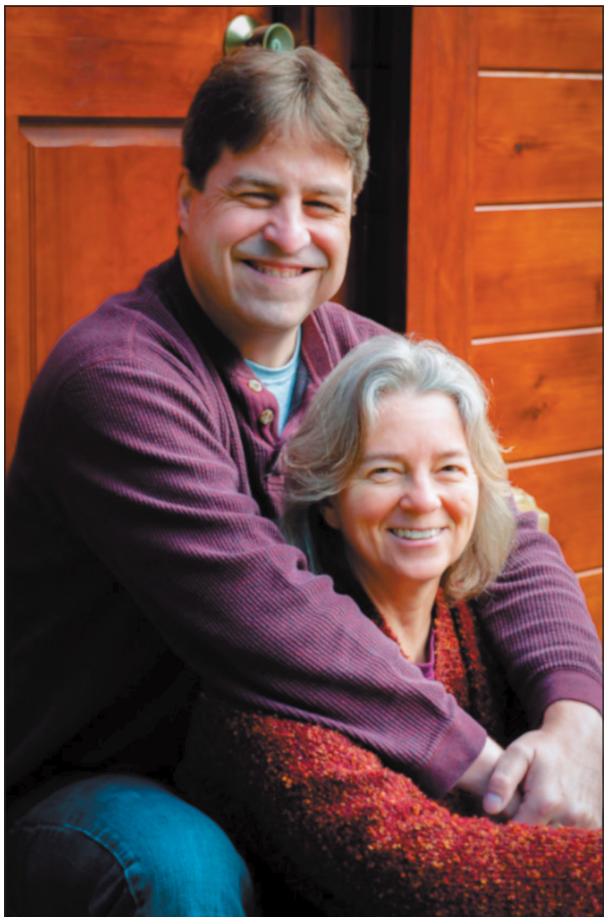
And that’s how Enumclaw authors and publishers Leah Cutter and Blaze Ward live their lives. Separately and together, they have achieved what many writers only dream about: getting paid, full time, to write. No commute. No bosses. Heck, no pants, if you want.

“The other fun part is, anybody can do it. I was talking to somebody about advice. They said, ‘What advice do you have for a young writer?’” Ward said in a recent interview. “Sit down, shut up, and write. We can get you through the other quarter, but that’s three quarters of it.”

Of course, the married couple didn’t just wake up one day and decide to live off their writing: it’s taken them years to be able to cobble together a revenue stream that has allowed them this level of independence.

And the first place to start, Ward said, is deciding what sort of writer you want to be.

“The question I always ask people is, do you want to be famous, or rich?” he said. “Famous means you go get a New York contract and an agent and your books are available in The Sequel down the street, Barnes and Nobel, and all that. As a rule, where you used to make \$50,000 or \$100,000 advances 20 years ago, these days it’s \$5,000 to \$10,000, if you’re lucky. And



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Blaze Ward and Leah Cutter may act like an old married couple, but they’ve only been married for five years. Together, the two have written dozens of novels, countless short stories, and even manage their own magazine anthologies.

you’re making 10, 15 cents a sale. You could never quit your day job.”

“My goal in life is to be Bernie Taupin. He’s the guy who wrote all of Elton John’s music. All of it,” Ward continued. “Nobody knows who Bernie is, but... he has money.”

So if it’s money you’re after, Ward and Cutter say, you’ve got to go the independent route.

Cutter learned this her own way after a brief stint of having her books traditionally published in the early

2000s. After a brief break from writing, she discovered she could potentially make far more money if she published her work herself.

Published traditionally, the couple said, nets authors cents on every sale; but independently, especially if the book is sold virtually, the profit is much higher.

“I need to move a lot less books to support myself doing everything independently than I would traditionally,” Cutter said.

But it’s not just about

writing one book, or even one series.

“You have to remember that putting out [one] book, you’re not going to make any money. You’re not suddenly going to be rich unless you rolled six 20s,” she continued, making a quick D&D reference while giving a nod to authors like Suzanne Collins and J.K. Rowling. “That first book will get you some, and it might just be a couple drops of money coming in. But then you have the next book, which gets you another couple more drops. Then the next book, which gets you some more drops. And then maybe an article, and that gets you a little bit of a stream. After the end of five to seven years, you don’t have just drops coming in — you’ve got trickles, and all those trickles turn into a really nice stream. And that’s the strategy you have to take if you’re doing long-term indie writing like we are.”

That’s where writing at pulp speed comes in.

“Today is day 300 of the year — I looked this morning — and I have averaged 3,941 words every day this year,” Ward said. “That includes days taken off, goofing off, being sick, whatever. But I’m writing 120,000 words a month, generally.”

Cutter writes at a more conservative speed at around 3,000 words a day.

That’s not easy work — the two of them take their own advice, just sitting down and writing until their daily word goal is met.

But the results are inarguable: Cutter has written seven trilogies, two quadrilogies, and 15 stand-alone novels, whereas Ward is

GoFundMe arranged for Mail Express

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A GoFundMe was recently created for Enumclaw’s Mail Express Business Center after it received a fine from the state for not enforcing the state’s mask mandates.

The fundraiser was made by Enumclaw City Councilman Beau Chevassus, though in a recent interview he said he’s not doing this as a local politician, but as a “customer and a friend, because I go in there every day, if not two times a day.”

He added that the idea of a COVID relief fundraiser was one he and the owner have discussed long before Washington’s Department of Labor and Industries announced 11 businesses, including Mail Express, were being fined for the lack of mask use by customers and staff; Mail Express received the largest fine of \$7,500.

The goal of the GoFundMe is to raise \$7,500, but none of the money can be used to pay off the fine. Instead, “funds generously donated will be used to bless the recovery efforts of Mail Express,” the fundraiser webpage reads.

Chevassus said the fundraiser isn’t political commentary on his end.

“The main takeaway... is they are real sweet, responsible people,” he continued. “They really do love the community, and I’m hoping other people will start GoFundMe’s for other businesses that are near and dear to their heart.”

To donate to the GoFundMe, head to www.gofundme.com/f/mail-express-covid19-essential-business-recovery; more than \$4,600 has already been raised of the \$7,499 goal.

Express Mail did not return requests for comment by press deadline.

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