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Literary Arts Patron- Mark Barkawitz



Mark Barkawitz has earned local and national awards for his fiction, poetry, essay, and screenwriting. His work has appeared in newspapers, magazines, literary journals & anthologies, 'zines, and on dozens of websites. He has IMDb feature film credits as screenwriter, actor, & associate producer for *Turn of the Blade* (NorthStar Ent.) and supporting actor in *The Killing Time* (New World Pictures). He's taught creative writing classes, coached a championship track team of student/athletes, and ran the 2001 L.A. Marathon in 3:44:42. He lives with his wife and has two kids in Pasadena, CA. www.markbark.org

1) What led to your decision to become a writer? How has it affected your life?

I was 26 and my starter marriage had ended. I was lying on the couch in my new bachelor pad, reading a novel my soon-to-be-ex-wife had left behind: Breakfast of Champions by the late,

great Kurt Vonnegut. When I closed the book for the final time, I said to myself: I can do that. The next day I enrolled in a short story writing class at the community college conveniently located at the end of the block.

As far as affecting my life, I'll defer to T.S. Eliot: "No honest poet can ever feel quite sure of the permanent value of what he has written: he may have wasted his time and messed up his life for nothing." LOL!

2) Beyond the written word, what other creative mediums inspire you and why?

I was involved with film for a while. But it's a collaborative art form and it takes a lot of energy and money to put a film project together. Even if you're fortunate enough to play with someone else's money (Rule No. 1), it's still a major commitment of one's time. When I finally got my first feature film produced, we had to work 17 days straight, 14-to-18-hour days (low budget/non-union) to get it in the can. My kids were young. I was suddenly no help at home. I had offers to write two more low-budget, straight-to-video features or become my nine-year-old son's pitching coach on his Little League team. I chose coaching; it's more fun. And I got material for my Giant Killers novel from the experience.

3) Why do you feel the arts (written, visual, performance, etc...) are such an important part of our past, present and future?

It's what separates us from the other creatures. We're the only species on earth that creates art. It's completely unnecessary to our physical existence. You have to have food, shelter, and clothing. You don't have to have art. But it's nice to have around. It's how we let the other humans know what we're thinking, feeling, doing; that we're not alone in the human predicament of life. The history of art—written, performed, painted, sculpted, and otherwise created—is the history of mankind.

