



Name: Kim Lengling
Category: Writers & Authors
Story Title: The Accidental Writer

Story / Journey:

I consider myself a bit of an accidental writer. Honestly, if you had told me years ago that I'd one day be writing books, articles, blogs, and hosting a podcast where I interview authors and storytellers from all walks of life, I probably would've laughed and said, "You've got the wrong person."

But sometimes life quietly nudges us toward things we didn't see coming.

In 2014, I was asked to participate as a co-author in a book alongside 19 other women, sharing stories meant to inspire others. At that point, I was completely new to writing. I had no idea what I was doing. I found myself learning about edits, critiques, rewrites,

structure, vulnerability, and what it actually means to share a personal story with readers.

And somewhere during that process, I got hooked.

But the truth is, my writing journey started long before that, and that's why I call myself an accidental writer.

About twenty years ago — gosh, time really does fly — I was asked to give a speech at a large veteran's event in my area. I had never written a speech, given one, or stood in front of a crowd. No pressure, right?

The speech centered around my step-grandfather, who was the last World War I veteran in my area. He passed away in 1997 at the age of 104, and while preparing for the speech, I spent hours with my stepdad going through old letters, faded photographs, military items, and keepsakes that had been packed away for decades.

It felt like opening a time capsule. Every letter told a story. Every photograph carried emotion. Every item held a piece of history.

For weeks, I worked on that speech. I read it out loud over and over again — to myself, to friends, to anyone willing to listen and give feedback. I rewrote sections constantly, trying to make sure I honored not only my step-grandfather's story, but the stories of so many veterans who served beside him.

Then the day of the event arrived. There I was, standing in front of approximately 800 people, with television and radio stations there covering the event. Again... no pressure.

I'll admit I was nervous, but something unexpected happened once I started speaking. Somewhere between the opening lines and the heart of the story, I stopped focusing on my nerves and fell into the story I was telling. I wasn't thinking about the crowd anymore. I was thinking about history, sacrifice, family, and honoring a generation that deserved to be remembered.

When I finished speaking, there was total silence. I remember looking up and thinking, "Oh no... I blew it." Then one person started clapping, and suddenly the entire crowd erupted in applause.

What I remember most, though, wasn't the applause. It was the people standing directly in front of me. Many of them were crying. Veterans. Family members. Complete strangers. And in that moment, I realized that stories have power. Real power.

As I walked through the crowd afterward, trying to find my stepdad, someone from the local newspaper approached me and asked if I'd ever consider writing a monthly article about veterans for the paper.

I laughed and politely declined. "Oh gosh, thanks," I said, "but I'm no writer." The person looked at me and asked, "Who wrote your speech?" "Well... I did." To which he replied, "Well, you are definitely a writer."

It's funny how sometimes someone else sees something in us long before we see it ourselves. That single moment changed the direction of my life.

I decided to give the monthly article a try. One article turned into fourteen years of monthly articles.

Over the years, I interviewed dozens and dozens — honestly, probably hundreds — of veterans, listening to their stories and helping preserve pieces of history that might otherwise have been forgotten. Every interview taught me something, not just about writing or history, but about people, resilience, humor, sacrifice, and connection.

And little by little, I kept learning. Through every article, blog, or book written. I've attended writers' conferences, met incredible authors, stretched myself creatively, and eventually launched my podcast, Let Fear Bounce, where storytelling and human connection remain at the center of what I do.

That very first speech — the one I was so nervous to give — led me on an unexpected journey into the world of non-fiction writing. That's where I've remained: in true stories, lived experiences, and the beautiful messiness of real life.

Whether I'm writing from my own experiences or helping share someone else's story, I've discovered that authenticity matters more than perfection ever will.

Now, I will admit... I do have a fiction book written. It is different from anything I normally

write. It's nowhere near ready to be published, but it exists, and honestly, I'm excited about it. I'm letting the process unfold in its own time and learning to enjoy the journey rather than rush toward the finish line.

That's something writing has taught me, too. Stories take time. People do too.

These days, I continue writing non-fiction, articles, and blogs, interviewing guests on my podcast, and learning something new from every experience. And if I can toss out a few nuggets of hope along the way — maybe encourage someone to share their own story, face a fear, or simply feel a little less alone — then I think this accidental writer is probably right where she's supposed to be.

www.kimlenglingauthor.com