



Terry Brooks is without a doubt a fantasy icon. Brooks has delighted readers throughout his career. With 23 bestsellers reaching the New York Times bestsellers list and over 21 million copies in print he is without a doubt one of the most iconic fantasy authors of our time. His original Shannara series led to the Heritage of Shannara series and the prequel First King of Shannara as well as other novels based in that land. He also penned the Magic Kingdom of Landover series and countless other titles. Terry later went on to novelize Star Wars: Episode 1 The Phantom Menace and Hook. His latest work Wards of Faerie: Book 1 is part of a highly anticipated trilogy with sequels to be released every six months. His biography titled Sometimes the Magic Works proves that is often true.

What was it like growing up in Illinois? What are some of your favorite memories from that time?

I liked the freedom of that time. Kids don't have it now. We led a very unstructured life where we were allowed to roam all over the neighborhood and often beyond. We didn't have that many organized activities and other than radio and records, no technology to distract us. We were forced to use our imaginations when it came to entertainment. I think that really set me on the path to becoming a writer.

What led you to give up being an attorney to become a full time author?

I was an attorney for 17 years. I published Sword of Shannara 9 years into that career. So after another eight and three more bestsellers, I thought it was time to let go of law and try my hand at being a full-time writer. I would have done this earlier, I think, if I hadn't been so afraid that all that free time would wreck my structured life.

How do you feel about being one of the bestselling living fantasy authors?

So much better than being one of the dead ones! I don't know, I don't think about it all that much. Mostly, I concentrate on matching my own criteria for the work I turn out.

I try to make each book at least as good as the last one, if not better. These days, being a bestseller seems less important than it once did.

Who else do you consider to be the best in the field?

I like Philip Pullman's work quite a lot. Really, there is something to enjoy in almost everyone's work. I don't like to pick favorites when so many are so good. I do prefer books with a positive story resolution and a sense of Good winning out over Evil. Nihilistic books tend to bore me.

How do you create such vivid worlds? What do you think is the most important thing when it comes to creating memorable characters?

I could spend some time on this one. But 25 words or less probably works best. For both plot and characters, the most important thing for me is living with both in my head for whatever time it takes for me to either decide I don't need them there or want to spend a year discovering more about both. You have to want to invest in your world and its people sufficiently that spending a year with both is important to you.

Why do you think people crave the escapism found in a good book?

People crave escapism in all sorts of forms. Everyone needs a break from their real life now and then, some more frequently than others. Everything from music to video to reading is there for that purpose. But much of it informs, too. So you have several things working at once. Books are different than other art forms for several reasons. First, you have to spend more time with a book than you do with any other art form. Second, you are required to use your imagination more: You have to envision everything the author describes and do so in your own special way. Reading is very interactive. Finally, a book you love stays with you longer and offers more time in which to absorb what the author has set out.

What was the first story you ever wrote?

I wrote a short story in the 4th Grade about four boys who spend the night in a haunted house and discover aliens and a rocket ship in the basement. At the conclusion, the aliens blast off into outer space leaving the house a wreck and the boys with a story no one will believe. Got an A+ on that one.

Are there any little known things about you that you'd not mind sharing?

I like being quiet and having people around me be quiet. We spend too much time talking to no particular purpose.

Of all your works, do you have any that are your favorites? If so, why do you favor it most?

As I have said for 35 years, that's like asking me to choose between my children. I love them all, but each for different reasons. All are my favorites, each represents my best effort at the time I wrote it. Some feel more fully realized than others, but what I note is how many different favorites the readers have. They don't seem to center around one or two, but stretch out to embrace all 30-some.

How do you think the publishing world has changed most since you first began your career?

Traditional publishing has been changed by the evolution of communication devices. Ebooks are revolutionary in their impact with readers. I think there are clearly more ways to reach readers and to be published in book form and to find a reading audience for your work. This is not to say that this is a good thing. An awful lot of online writing is truly horrible. But it is what it is.

What advice would you offer the writers of tomorrow?

Oh, I would say the same things I've always said. You have to persevere and believe in yourself. You have to be a student of the craft. Wanting it isn't enough to get you there. But wanting it is very, very important. In some ways, your commitment has to be complete. Even if you fail, you have to want it still. Writing is demanding and inextricably linked to who we are as writers. I know I would write no matter what because I am not a complete person when I am not writing.

Where do you draw your inspiration from?

Creditors? Bills and mortgages? I don't know how much I believe in inspiration. I think writing is so integral to who I am that I just do it because I have to. The need to tell stories, to express what I am feeling about characters and issues and themes in the structure of the writing is overwhelming. Oh, wait. I should tell you that reading the news is very inspirational. I work best when I am incensed by or conflicted about an issue.

Is there any one thing you have yet to accomplish that you'd most like to?

Hmm. Not really. More bestsellers? More months on the bestseller lists? How much does anyone need? I just want to keep doing what I am doing and have readers respond the way they always have. With love and appreciation and encouragement. You get back what you give in this life.

How do you think you have changed most since your early days?

I think I am a better writer. Not a better storyteller necessarily, but a better craftsman. I've learned how to do a book much better and with a stronger sense of purpose than I did in the beginning of things. I am less troubled by the task itself, less daunted. I can do twice the work in half the time, and that's the result of study and practice. This is a craft you can get better at by doing. Over and over, until you feel it in your bones.

Can you tell a little about Wards of Faerie? What can your readers expect to find in this trilogy?

The heart of the trilogy lies in a search for the missing Elfstones of Faerie, a magic that has been discussed in the Shannara book on and off since the beginning.

Only the blue Elfstones, the Seeking Stones, survived the old times. No one knows what happened to the other sets. No one even knows what they look like or what they can do. Now, because of a diary found by a young female Druid, the answer may be discoverable. In Wards, the search begins and will carry through book 2 to the end of book 3. This is a classic quest story with most of the usual complications and dangers. For some, it results in a coming of age. For others, it ends badly.

What projects are you looking forward to releasing next?

I am working on a series of ebook short stories for the Shannara readers just now, the first of which was about Allanon and is already posted online. The second will be about Garet Jax. The title of the series is Paladins of Shannara. I am committed to writing three, but might do three more after that. An annotated Sword of Shannara with some interesting illustrations comes out this fall. After that, I will have to see where my head is at.

If you don't mind my asking, what are your feelings on life hereafter? How do you hope to be remembered when your time comes?

I am a live-for-the-moment sort of guy who believes that what we do in this life makes all the difference. I don't worry too much about the afterlife. That will have to take care of itself. I don't expect to influence how people think of me down the road once I am gone, either. I've never written for a future audience, only for readers in the here and now. If my books are still out there in a hundred years, that would be great. But it won't impact me, either way.

Thanks for spending time listening to me babble on. I have already violated my answer to question #10 in the most glaring fashion possible. I have to go now and do penance.