

From Jerry Apps' essay: "Six Things I Learned From 50 Years of Book Writing":

1. **The Value of a Writing Apprenticeship** — Starting in 1957 as a University of Wisconsin Extension Agent, he wrote 500-word newspaper columns and was mentored (and edited hard) by old-school newspaper editors, which taught him word choice, clear sentences, and to avoid "flowery" language — captured in one editor's line, "If you've got nothing to say, please don't try and say it."
2. **The Power of the Story** — He grew up in a Wisconsin farm community full of oral storytellers, and that oral tradition became the foundation for his written stories once he began freelance newspaper writing in 1966 and, with editor/publisher Robert Gard's help, his first book, *The Land Still Lives* (1970).
3. **I Write Within a Niche** — His niche, in four words, is "Stories From The Land" — rural history drawn from his farm upbringing and career, combined with heavy research even into subjects he didn't personally know, like his book on the Civilian Conservation Corps in Wisconsin.
4. **I Respect the Advice of Editors** — He spends more time revising than drafting and relies on outside editors even though he's edited professionally himself, comparing it to a surgeon not operating on their own appendix.
5. **I've Learned How to Market My Work** — He spends over a third of his writing time marketing: TV and radio interviews, five Public Television documentaries, a weekly blog reaching thousands plus a newspaper column, speaking at libraries and historical societies, and running "Telling Your Story" workshops for decades.
6. **I Try to Nourish My Creative Core** — He believes everyone has a creative core, and he keeps his alive through gardening, hiking, nature study, mind-mapping, and seeking out quiet, distraction-free time — practices he also teaches his writing students.