

GIRL AT PLAY

SHE'S BUSINESS. SHE'S CREATIVE. SHE'S BONAFIDE!

**Interview for: National Association of Women Writers
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Bio:

Alex Beauchamp is a freelance writer and girl at play who writes columns, articles and books on a wide range of topics such as travel and creativity. Her personal story of how she left a successful corporate career to pursue her passion for writing has been featured in magazines, web sites and newspapers around the world and she continues to share her story on her web site, <http://www.girlatplay.com>. Immigrating to America in 1999, she now resides in a colourful flat overlooking a lake in Seattle, where she can be found writing, painting, creating, and enjoying the life of a writer.

When did you realize you wanted to be a writer?

At the age of 27, in a successful but unhappy corporate career, I continuously asked myself, "What is my passion?" I had no idea and envied those who always knew theirs.

Time is always a vantage point and now, looking back, I realise that at eight I wanted to be a writer; I had declared it then by creating a newspaper that I sold locally. However, I slowly forgot my passion for writing as I grew up and felt the pangs of "being responsible." This meant instead of being creative, I went linear and became a successful corporate executive, albeit an unfulfilled one.

At 27 I knew that pantsuits and 8am meetings weren't my passions but I had no idea what was. Nothing seemed obvious to me until I travelled back to my childhood home, saw my old writing and remember how alive I felt when I wrote. It was after that trip that I once again declared I was going to write for a living, although it would take me three months of working up the courage to do so.

2. How and when did you make this dream a reality?

In April 2001 I did the scariest thing imaginable; I gave up a secure, prestigious position in a corporate career to pursue freelance writing. With no experience, savings or leads I relied heavily on the belief that writing was what I was meant to do.

I read any and every book on how to write, query, and publish work. I put together a web site to showcase my writings and build up an audience. I contacted other artists – not just writers – I admired for advice on how they dealt with being self-employed and staying creative. I also learned a lot just by doing; testing the waters with dozens of queries, self-publishing articles on-line to see what people responded to, and learning from rejection.

After a year and a half of learning, I was burnt out and had lost the passion I had started with. I didn't have direction, vision or focus because I had been so caught up in trying to get published that I hadn't stopped to ask myself if I liked what I was publishing and if what I was publishing was enough.

This led me to take a four-month break from writing where instead of picking up the pen, I picked up paintbrushes and cameras. I realised during my break that there were certain things I no longer wanted to write about, certain styles I didn't enjoy writing and certain routines that although worked for my fellow writers, didn't work for me. Indulging myself in other creative outlets and learning about what made me tick, I was able to return to writing with a new passion and interest.

I took my renewed energy for writing and became more focused with it, especially the business side. I revamped my web site, learned more about finances, marketed more and set a schedule for writing. I took control of my writing career, writing more for my pleasure than for publishing credit and that led to better writing, more success and a lot more personal joy.

I've come to realise that writing is such a personal experience and the life of a writer can only be learned by trial and error whether it be full-time or just five minutes each night.

3. What's the most important lesson you've learned so far in your writing career?

The most important lesson I've learned is that nothing happens if you don't try. There is no dream that can come true if you don't take the first step to begin the journey. A lot of people wait for some big moment – a lotto win, the children gone, the finances saved to quit that job – but doing what you love is possible in even five minutes every day. The trick to successes isn't time or money – it's *doing*.

4. What are you working on right now?

I crave variety with my writing because I believe as a creative person, the more projects I work on, the better my writing. That means that I have a lot of different and unusual projects going on such as travel articles, two book projects on women's creativity based on my successful web sites GirlatPlay.com and AnotherGirlatPlay.com, an art exhibit, and speaking engagements. I'm also working on brewing that perfect cup of tea.

5. What excites or ignites your soul?

Possibility. I love that any idea I come up with, any dream that I have, any moment I want is possible – all I have to do is try.