

## Top 10 reasons to write a textbook (a tribute to the GOAT of late night hosts, David Letterman)

The following happened to me one night in the mid-90s:

My routine then – probably familiar to assistant professors everywhere sweating their way toward tenure – was to work till dinnertime, dash home for a meal and then, more often than not, return to the office and labor till late over a paper or proposal.

In my case, dinner was almost invariably consumed while watching the Late Show. For about an hour, Dave pretty much wiped away all those dark thoughts of what-if-I-didn't-make-it (yep, my life pretty much revolved around that one goal of tenure) and after I would be grinning ear to ear, remembering some stupid pet trick or a Dave prank call, as I made my way out in the cold back to work.

One night, though, I was late leaving the office. Dave came on at 10:35pm in Milwaukee and it was nearly 10:30. I jumped out of the elevator, into my car, and headed home as fast as I thought I safely could.

And, was pulled over at the first light. Damn! What had I done wrong? I had been careful not to speed.

“Do you know why I pulled you over?”

“No, officer, I really have no idea.” I said with hands on the wheel as I knew you were supposed to have when visiting with the police.

“You rolled right past the stop sign when you turned into the street from the university parking lot.”

Whoops, I bet he was right.

“Sorry, officer. I just wanted to make it home for the Late Show and it was getting near time. I hope you don't hit me too hard.” I tried my best contrite-student-in-the-principal's-office look.

“Ah, a Letterman fan. Funny guy, Dave, like him too. But, boy, can he be a jerk if he's having a bad day.” I couldn't quite picture the gravel-voiced mid-western giant towering over me savoring a Letterman subtlety but fandom is a brotherhood. I was no longer nervous.

“So, here's what I am going to do. I am letting you off with a warning. Do this again and you're in trouble. Now drive slowly. I'll be watching. No one's worth breaking the law for.”

Ever since, I had dreamed of becoming famous, for whatever reason, visiting with Dave, handing him a \$50-bill as I sat down, saying that's what he had saved me and telling the story.

So here's to you, Dave.

The top ten reasons to write a textbook:

10. To help the world's poor. Once absorbed in the equations they won't care anymore that they are naked and hungry.

9. For Afghanistan. When they get their hands on the book rival factions will be so united in their hatred of the author that peace will break out in the land.

8. Sex. Yes, you've seen basketball groupies and you've seen rock band groupies, but wait till you get a load of academic author groupies.

7. To impress random strangers. Hold the book upside down at the airport and when someone asks, say, "Oh, but I don't really need to read it. You see I wrote the book."

6. It was either read another mind-numbingly dreary 1000-page textbook or write one. Which would you rather do?

5. My relationship with my computer. Yes, we were always close, but it felt kind of fragile. Now we're inseparable.

4. You really want to hear about my, er, social life?

3. Wanted something to do which would fit seamlessly into my day: get up at noon, start drinking at 1, eat out of cans and never leave the apartment in order to avoid dealing with weird people.

2. To give something back to the academic community of which I am proud to be a member. Those other bastards made me read a lot of their crap.

1. Needed the money. This turned out to be one heck of a joke.