

## **Q & A FOR *WITH IT OR IN IT: DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM FROM THE LOADER'S HATCH***

1. What brought you to write *With It or In It*?
  - a. A couple of things, really. First, I had recently started a blog and was brainstorming content to put in it. I eventually came up with an idea for a serial, covering various stages of my experience with deploying to Saudi Arabia during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. After that, I would occasionally have “ah-ha!” moments where something I’d forgotten would crawl to the surface of my memory, and I’d go back and edit existing entries or create new ones. After a couple of years of doing that, I realized there was enough material to justify turning it into a more full-length treatment.
2. Why spend years of your life writing it?
  - a. Some of it was personal, just wanting to get the details right and still leave behind a cogent story for future generations. I wanted to honor those I’d served with, and telling my story from my point of view seemed like a good way to do that. Also, I hope that my perspective may touch someone else, allowing her or him to realize that some things people experience are universal: fear of the unknown, self-doubt, and that these things can be conquered.
3. What are you trying to achieve with it?
  - a. Partly, I haven’t seen much of the story of that war told from the perspective of the line trooper. There are books about the conflict by officers, helicopter pilots, fighter pilots, and Tom Clancey wrote a couple of books that cover this time frame, but mostly used officers as his reference sources. There are a lot of books at the strategic level, covering how the White House and Central Command did their business. I haven’t seen any that told the story of the experience of an enlisted soldier. So the first goal was to get some of that perspective out there. I am also hoping that I can inspire others with similar tales, from any conflict, to tell their

tale as well. There is nothing wrong with having the perspective of a fighter pilot or the Operations Officer of one of the Armored Divisions involved, but they can have a very different experience of war than does the Loader of an M1A1 tank for example, or the Marine Rifleman crawling through mud and wire and mine obstacles. Both perspectives are necessary for understanding, and I hope I can bring mine across and inspire others to do the same.

4. What got left out in the final draft?
  - a. Mostly, profanity! After some serious consideration, I decided that it would be better to leave the book as PG-13 as I could. Despite the reality that Soldiers and other service members often curse or use foul language, it seemed almost out of place even if it lends realism to the dialog. Other than that, I didn't really have to cut out much.
5. What's next for you? What are you working on now?
  - a. Right now I also have a non-fiction book for veterans, a book of advice for getting into, paying for, and graduating from college after getting out of the military. It's very close to being done, but still needs some work. I'm also working on revising the novel I wrote during 2015's National Novel Writing Month—I won, writing more than 58,000 words that month—and hopefully being able to get that revised and ready for publication in 2016.
6. Why did you choose the title *With It or In It*?
  - a. I wanted to harken back to the old adage of Spartan women sending their men off to battle: Come back with your shield, or on it. For a tanker, of course, that means either bringing the tank and your crewmates back alive with you, or dying in the tank saving the lives of others. While we always harbored hope for a peaceful resolution allowing us to return from Saudi Arabia without fighting, we kind of knew we'd wind up having to fight our way out. Definitely better to come back with it rather than than in it, however. Not everyone was as fortunate.
7. How did you get started writing?

- a. While I was in college, I did a lot of writing for myself. I'd been a poet from way back, and my paternal grandmother was a poet of some renown so it sort of runs in the family. Immediately after college, I began working in technology jobs but kept writing, and particularly kept writing poetry and poetic prose. Later, after having worked in EMS for a few years both as an EMT and a Paramedic, I started collecting story ideas, and also discovered blogging. The blogging in particular helped a lot. I found it possible to take my own expertise and experience and reach tens of thousands of people, and it grew from there.
8. Who are your favorite authors?
  - a. All time, hands down favorite author is Piers Anthony. I discovered the *Incarnations of Immortality* series when I was stationed in Germany, from 1987-1989, and I still read the complete series every couple of years. As much as I enjoyed the books, I think I may like the Author's Notes better, wherein he describes his process of writing that particular book. It is a great insight into being a professional author. I also love J. R. R. Tolkien, Frank Herbert, Neal Stephenson, William Gibson, Toni Morrison, and Robert Heinlein.
9. What books have influenced you the most?
  - a. The *Incarnations* series I mentioned, those books are big influences. They are such fun to read, and of course his Author's Notes are great. *Dune* and *Lord of the Rings* are probably the most influential on my fiction writing, both being excellent examples of epic world-building.
10. What do you do when you're not writing?
  - a. When I'm not writing, I am usually reading. I also do some independent software development. I have an app on the iTunes App Store which does simulated dice rolling, mostly for role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons®. I also care for my mother, who has suffered a couple of strokes and needs at-home help. Recreationally, I like to hike the various trails near my home in Tucson, Arizona. I also like to bike on The Loop, which

is a non-motorized, mostly paved path system in and around Tucson. It connects to most of the major areas of town, and although not completed yet it will be more than 110 miles of pathway for biking, pedestrians, and horseback riding through and around town.

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