**What kinds of books did you take out of the library when you got your first library card?**

I got my first library card when I was around 6 or 7 years old. In those days there was no pre-K, and there was no instruction in reading until First Grade. I know that as soon as I was learning to read in school, I pestered my mother to take me down to the library to get a library card, because there were not a lot of books around the house.

At the time, we only had one car in the family, and my father took that to work. My mother did not even learn to drive until I was about 3 or 4. So whenever we had to go to a store, the cleaners, the post office or run any other kind of errand, we would walk there. Fortunately, we lived very close to downtown Lodi. So I had seen the library in my many walks downtown with my mother because we passed the library on the way to the bank.

The earliest books I can remember taking out of the library were a series of biographies of famous people. This was a series written for children that often focused on the famous person’s childhood. I can remember reading about Abraham Lincoln living in a log cabin as a boy and reading at night by candlelight.

When I got a bit older, my maternal grandfather (who was an avid reader) turned me on to mystery stories like Sherlock Holmes, and short stories by O. Henry and DeMaupassant. Getting hooked on mysteries sent me off to read the Hardy Boys books. And when I was in my early teens, I read all the James Bond books.

I loved reading mysteries so much that I started to try to write them. I wrote a short mystery set on Tonga Island in the South Pacific when I was in 8th Grade. I continued that sort of writing through high school with lots of short stories written for English class. I loved to have surprise endings like O. Henry. Actually, I think most of these would be called micro stories because of how short they were. I liked writing a story in under 1,000 words. I knew how to write concisely. This led me inevitably to think about journalism as a career.