

Biography on stephen king



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Stephen Edwin King was born in Portland, Maine, on September 21, 1947, the son of Donald and Nellie Ruth King. His father, a merchant seaman, deserted the family in about 1950. His mother took a succession of low-paying jobs to support him and his brother, David. A lonely, rather introverted child, King invented a more outgoing alter ego - Cannonball Cannon, a daredevil who "did good deeds" - and derived other vicarious thrills from listening to tales of horror on the radio, reading such spine-tingling comic books as *Weird Science*, *Tales from the Crypt*, and *Tales from the Vault*.

He also went to see science fiction and monster movies. In October 1957, the local theater manager interrupted a Saturday matinee screening of *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* to announce the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik, the first artificial earth satellite. It was then that King sensed for the first time "a useful connection between the world of fantasy and that of what my *Weekly Reader* used to call current events.

Eventually, countless viewings over the years of such classic horror films as *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *The Thing*, and *It Came from Outer Space* convinced him that the horror movie's chief value is "its ability to form a liaison between our fantasy fears and our real fears." The fortunate discovery of his father's paperback collection of fantasy-horror fiction gave King, in his own words, a "taste of a world that went deeper than the B-pictures...or the boys' fiction of Carl Carner and Roy Rockwell.

The young King was surprised to find that his long-absent father had shared his interest in the genre, but even more surprised to learn that Donald King wrote several horror stories and submitted them, without success, to Bluebook, Argosy, and other magazines. Stephen King was determined to make his own mark as a writer. While still a student at the local high school, he tried his hand at composing offbeat short stories. He never sold a single one, but he did win first prize in an essay competition sponsored by a scholastic magazine.

He took time off from his studies to play on the varsity football team, and was, for several years, the rhythm guitarist in an amateur rock ' n' roll band called the MoonSpinners. After he graduated from high school, King attended the University of Maine at Orono on a scholarship. Majoring in English, he took creative writing courses and contributed a weekly column called " The Garbage Truck" to the campus newspaper.

By the time he had obtained his B. S. degree in 1970, he had sold two stories - " The Glass Floor" and " The Reaper's Image" - to Startling Mystery Stories for \$35 each. Over the next few years, he published short stories in Cavalier, Gent, Penthouse, and Cosmopolitan, but he earned so little money as an author, that he was forced to add to his income by working at such jobs as janitor, library aide, gas station attendant, and presser in an industrial laundry. Discouraged and dejected by his mounting pile of rejection slips, King almost scrapped the manuscript of what was to become his first published novel, Carrie.

Luckily, his wife retrieved the discarded pages from the trash and encouraged him to complete the book and submit it to Bill Thompson, an editor at Doubleday & Company, Inc. , who had shown an interest in his work in the past. Most critics dismissed *Carrie* as gory and overdone, but horror buffs snapped it up. Total sales of the book eventually topped the 4, 000, 000 mark and the film version, became one of the top-grossing films of 1976. King cheerfully admits that " the movie made the book and the book made me.

Over the next several years, Doubleday published four more horror books by Stephen King: ' *Salem's Lot* (1975), *The Shining* (1977), *Night Shift* (1978), and *The Stand* (1978). In 1980, he published *Firestarter*, in 1981, *Cujo*, in 1987, *Misery*, and has produced many more novels and short stories since then. King says, in his introduction to *Night Shift*, " Beneath its fangs and fright wig," the horror tale is " as conservative as an Illinois Republican in a three-piece pinstriped suit.

Its main purpose is to reaffirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands. Within the framework of most horror tales, we find a moral code so strong it would make a Puritan smile. " A prolific writer, King excels at turning ordinary situations—such as peer pressure, marital stress, or infidelity—into terror. Many of his novels have been made into successful movies. King has also written under the pseudonym Richard Bachman.