

Albert Bender
7/17/95

First Lines:

1. So I'm on the job only one week, and it's nice and quiet in the library when this guy walks in with a tuba mounted on his right shoulder.
2. Jay held his aunt Ruth's hand as he watched his mother's coffin descend into the earth.
3. Sandra knows exactly what she's doing whenever she flutters those powder blue eyes.
4. He stood alone in the middle of the bridge, looking out over the railing.
5. I keep on telling you--I am not dead.

Flannery O'Connor: "If you start with a real personality, a real character, then something is bound to happen; and you don't have to know what before you begin. In fact, it may be better if you don't know what before you begin. You ought to be able to discover something from your stories. If you don't, probably nobody else will." (p.1)

E.L. Doctorow: "Planning to write is not writing. Outlining... researching... talking to people about what you're doing, none of that is writing. Writing is writing."
(p. 96)

I find these two quotes both helpful to me and relevant to each other. One (O'Connor's) deals with a beginning mind set, and the other (Doctorow's) focuses on getting the actual words on paper. Writers who believe they must know every outcome or resolution before they begin to write, do everything except the writing itself. Thus, even in the unlikely event that they did somehow finish, their story would most probably be unsuccessful. In these two quotes is a lesson I can give to my students: If worrying about where your story is headed makes you unable to get your words down, you can never be a writer.