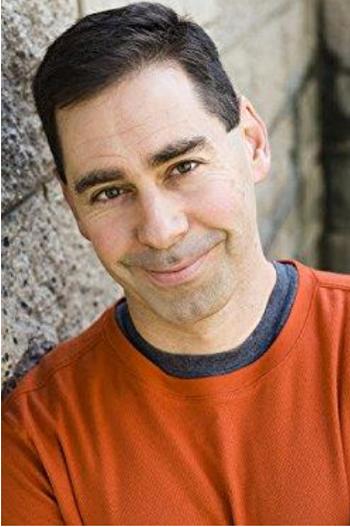


Spotlight on: Andy Wasif

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Biography



Andy Wasif is a humorist and comedian living between Sharon and Los Angeles whose background includes improv training at prestigious schools like [Upright Citizens Brigade](#) and [Improv Olympic](#) and two years performing stand-up in clubs and colleges throughout the country.

His written work includes a trilogy of humor books highlighting the rivalry between Boston Red Sox fans and those of the New York Yankees, the third installment ([Red Sox Fans are From Mars, Yankees Fans are From Uranus](#)) becoming a [Boston Globe](#) bestseller. These led to his own blog for Yahoo! Sports on-line magazine [The PostGame](#) ("[Wasif's World](#)") which focused on humorous commentary and athlete feature stories.

His most recent books have been more diverse in theme—[Hollywood Primer: Everything You Need to Know Before Moving to Los Angeles](#), a comically observant and honest look at what it's like to live in Los Angeles; [Will Beg for Dignity](#), a collection of hilarious personal essays; [Don't Talk Sports at the Dinner Table](#), a selection of his greatest hits from his Yahoo! blog; and [Adult Puberty](#), a guide to that next phase of bodily changes no one told you about.

He turned [Adult Puberty](#) into a short film that was a parody of those sexual education videos from the 1960s starring award-winning actor Barry Bostwick, and is now expanding it into a [web series](#). And his comedy screenplay, *The 70 Year Itch*, about a couple married fifty years who decide to separate and play the field, was optioned by Amazon Studios with Donald Petrie (*Grumpy Old Men*, *Miss Congeniality*) attached to direct.

[Find Andy's work at the Sharon Public Library!](#)

Interview

1. What can you tell us about living between Sharon and Los Angeles? (It seems like a pretty big difference.)

It's the best of all worlds. You want anything and everything going on, go to LA. You want to avoid traffic and phony pretenders, return to Sharon. I've come to look at Los Angeles as a "work town." That's where the grind happens. You have access to studios, agents, teamsters, and artists of all kinds and there's a creative energy that is hard to miss.

But it's not real. I, personally, need to go someplace with real people and real daily life where everyone sitting at a coffee shop (where I do most of my writing) doesn't have a laptop out while talking about script notes. In fact, I like to go up the coast to Santa Barbara for a few days when I'm drafting a script, or up to Maine when I'm in Sharon, where I can just feel

more like myself and take a breath. This is where I get most of my inspiration, outside of Los Angeles.

But LA has a lot to do and after 20 years, I run into people I know everywhere I go, just like in Sharon.

2. Do you have any particularly favorite haunts when you are working, here in Sharon, or in Maine or Santa Barbara?

I'm very particular about my writing spots. Any place needs to have a good vibe, all-day parking, and ample outlets for plugging in. WiFi is optional depending on whether I'm doing research or just a draft.

In Sharon, options are limited and I'll usually end up running into old friends I grew up with, so I'll go to [Perks](#) in Norwood Center. In Maine, the [Ogunquit Public Library](#) is basically a two-room stone building. It's peaceful and very comfortable so I'll get a few hours in before hitting the beach. My favorite spot is a small town outside Santa Barbara called [Carpinteria](#) with one main road going through town a couple of blocks from the beach. When I'm finishing up a project, I'll head up there and get a hotel. I'll walk down the street to [Crushcakes](#), a coffee shop with great food and desserts. I'll have breakfast there, then lunch, then walk back to the hotel around 5 to have dinner and do a couple more hours before bed and returning the next day or two.

3. What inspired you to get into writing?

I quote [Adrian Monk](#), "It's a gift... and a curse." I can always remember being creative. I doodled cartoons (badly drawn, but brilliantly scripted) on the backs of worksheets at school. And I remember in the fifth grade having to do a research paper on a subject. I chose Puerto Rico because we had just traveled there. The first page of my report was a scene from my house the morning of our trip, with dialogue and everything. At the end, I graciously included a little blurb about Puerto Rico. The teacher was like, "Um, o-kay. Thank you, Andy." And my report cards always had the words "creative" to it.

I grew up watching sitcoms and got the comic timing down with a little practice and many botched attempts. I saw myself writing them, but really, I was always better at short and quick fare. But I think writing chooses you. So many people have ideas and will tell you, "I wish I could write." I tell them, just start writing. But it's something innate that you can't shake no matter how much I may try.

4. Which sitcoms influenced you?

You'll find a lot of influence in my work. I used to like a mix of broad physical comedy and well-written fare, especially with snappy comebacks. So I loved shows like [Three's Company](#), [Benson](#), [Cheers](#), and [Golden Girls](#), among others. These shows and the humor they used have stuck with me throughout my life.

5. You say you have always been better at "short and quick fare," so I assume you started out writing essays or screenplays? Why and how did you transition into writing novel-length books?

I did start writing sitcoms before I did comedy sketches and stand-up bits, which I found were much shorter and easier to come up with. The screenplays took a great deal of time and the structure is very scientific. Books are time-consuming, but I've found them much freer. You just put all your ideas down and then craft it however you want. It's like a series of thoughts with a narrative purpose. The novel I'm working on is more along the lines of a screenplay with less structure.

6. What more can you tell us about the novel you are currently working on? Any other future projects coming up?

After my first book, I made the mistake of sitting back and waiting for it to sell without working on anything else. I was miserable. So I'm always working on something, each project at different stages. I just finished a teen drama that was not my idea, but I was with it from the beginning, helping to develop and write it. And then I am piecing together scenes for a children's book about a substitute teacher. The novel, entitled [The Streak](#), has required a lot of research as it takes place in 1960 and focuses on a standoffish baseball player who befriends a kid with cancer. (It's a drama, in case you were wondering.) And on the side, I just started a greeting card company that pokes fun at sports rivals, similar to my books, only with (far) fewer pages. It all keeps the creative juices flowing!

7. Congratulations on your screenplay being picked up! If you could cast the characters for the production, what would your ideal cast look like?

One of the first things Donald wanted to know when we sat down to discuss the script rewrite was who I saw playing the characters. This is always so much fun. And with a script that has great roles for so many senior actors, I just want every favorite of mine from growing up. He brought a reality to it. His top choices were [Shirley MacLaine](#) and [Raquel Welch](#), and he spoke to both of them. I had a much broader list of talent in mind from [Alan Arkin](#) to [Christopher Walken](#), [Henry Winkler](#), [James Caan](#), all the way to a couple of smaller roles for besties [Julie Andrews](#) and [Carol Burnett](#).

I'd be happy with any actor as long as the movie gets on the big screen.

8. What part of the movie-production process are you most looking forward to? Will you have a significant role in making the movie, or are you more of a consultant on the project?

When I produce a smaller project, I have more say though I usually let someone else handle the heavy grunt-work (casting, budget, finding a location, etc). I like to focus on making sure the script works. In a bigger production, I'm just happy to watch from the sidelines. If they need a rewrite, I'm always ready and willing.

I most look forward to the time on the set when they say, "Action." You get a fantastic up-front look behind the curtain of Hollywood, which satisfies the fan in me while the writer in me can see what works and what doesn't. This is important in comedy, in case a joke falls flat.

9. Have you ever had to do a rewrite or tweak a joke that didn't go over as well in real-time?

Most of the jokes I've had to tweak after bombing in real time came from the stand-up stage. After several attempts, I generally came to the conclusion the audiences were at fault for not getting them (wink). But on the set, I usually come up with alternate jokes ahead of time and that way, we can save time. This is mainly because jokes play different on the page than spoken. (The great comedic actors can make any line a joke, I have found.)

10. As a comedian and screenplay writer, you have a unique authorial perspective. What, in your opinion, makes for really excellent writing?

A friend of mine would joke that monkeys make everything funnier. I have a different take on it, however. I'm afraid I won't be too profound here, but my strength lies in dialogue and humor (as opposed to story and character which do not come as naturally to me) and so the best writing, in my opinion, is simply stuff that is relatable while surprising. If you catch the audience off-guard while still presenting something that makes sense organically, you've won.

The best joke I told on stage did this: "I was walking with my 2-year-old nephew through the park. He saw a tree and said, 'Duck'; he saw a sandbox and said, 'Duck'; he saw a swing set and said, 'Duck.' I thought that's so adorable, he doesn't know what a duck is... until a soccer ball hit me in the head and he said, 'I told you three freakin' times, idiot.'"

5 Books Andy Thinks You Should Read

[Lunatics](#) by Dave Barry and Alan Zweibel. *Hands down the funniest book I've ever read. (Dave Barry has always been my humor idol.)*

[Naked Pictures of Famous People](#) by Jon Stewart. *The model for my first book that I sold for \$5 after stand-up sets across the country.*

[Death on the Nile](#) by Agatha Christie. *I'm a big murder mystery fan (if you couldn't tell from the Adrian Monk reference).*

[Shoeless Joe](#) by W.P. Kinsella. *The best baseball book there is.*

[Without Feathers](#) by Woody Allen. *Another book of short prose that tickles my gible.*