

Written by Mike Schulz

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You might think that the art of writing fiction would have little in common with the art of practicing law. Scott Turow would beg to differ.

"They're actually very similar tasks," says Turow, the bestselling author who is also a partner at the Chicago law firm of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal. "You know, you've got to shape characters and shape witness testimony You are an author in *both* venues to a great extent, and particularly as a prosecutor, you really do need to keep your eye on the narrative, and make sure it's compelling."

To be sure, Turow knows his way around a compelling narrative, as the author of 1987's *Presumed Innocent*

- which spent nearly a year on the *New York Times*

bestseller list - and such acclaimed legal thrillers as

The Burden of Proof, *The Laws of Our Fathers*,

and

Personal Injuries

. Collectively, Turow's courtroom-themed novels and nonfictions have been translated into more than 25 languages and have sold more than 25 million copies worldwide.

And on January 26, at Davenport's Adler Theatre, Turow will offer insight into how he's

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managed to find success in - and a balance between - two intensely time-consuming vocations, when he speaks as the latest guest in the Eastern Iowa Community College District's "Viewpoint Distinguished Speakers Series."

"My friends who were in law school," says Turow during a recent phone interview, "they all kept telling me that you can't write and do this [practice law] at the same time. But I was smart enough to figure out at 24 or 25 that if you don't *try* to have the life you want, you're never gonna have it. So I made the decision to try, and obviously it ended up working out really well for me."



All a Discovery

Born in Chicago in 1949, Turow says that "certainly by the time I was 11 or 12, I decided that I wanted to be a writer," especially after reading Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. "I read that when I was malingering from school, over probably two or three days, and I had never been happier to have tonsillitis in my life. It was costumes, sword-fighting, and revenge. I loved it."

The future author of mysteries also loved whodunits ("I read all the way through Sherlock Holmes"), and says that after much writing in high school and his position as the editor for New Trier High School's student newspaper, "the plan from the time I got to college was to be a novelist. Much to the chagrin of my parents, who thought medical school sounded like a much better idea."

Turow attended Amherst College, where he majored in American Studies, and subsequently received an Edith Mirrielees Fellowship to the Stanford University Creative Writing Center. In 1972, he began a three-year tenure as a creative-writing instructor and lecturer in the school's English department. And then, in 1975, his nascent career moved in a rather unusual direction -

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to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Turow enrolled in Harvard Law School.

"That," he says, "was purely an inspiration because my career as a writer of fiction was not exactly off to a rocket start, and I saw myself drifting into a life as an English professor. And it really wasn't something that I wanted to do. So I said, you know, 'I've got to figure out something else, some way to support myself, so I can write.'

"I considered advertising," he continues, "or going to Hollywood and taking a studio writing job, which used to exist in those days. But I had a lot of friends who were lawyers, and what they were doing just seemed extremely exciting to me. I knew nothing *about* the law or lawyers at that stage in my life, so it was all a discovery."

And a discovery that readers would also be privy to, as Turow's experiences were the subject of his first book-length nonfiction: 1977's *One L: The Turbulent True Story of a First Year at Harvard Law School*

As its author tells it, the writing of *One L* "was kind of an accident." Prior to his Harvard Law enrollment, says Turow, "I sent a letter to my agent - she'd been trying to sell a novel I wrote - and I said, 'You know, somebody ought to write a book about what it's like to be a law student, because there *isn't* anything like that out there.'"

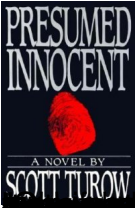
His agent, in turn, brought the idea up during a lunch with a lawyer acquaintance and editor Ned Chase - the father of Chevy - and by the meal's end, says Turow, "Ned said, 'This kid can write. Why don't we commission this book?' And that's what they did."

Scheduled to deliver the manuscript after completing his first year at Harvard Law, Turow says that the juggling of a class schedule, study time, and writing was made more bearable through a valuable discovery.

Presumed Impossible: Author and Attorney Scott Turow Speaks at the Adler Theatre, January 26

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AdlerTheatre.com