

Philip Jacques
Interview by Sue Staats

Philip has had the Stories on Stage Sacramento interview lens turned on him before, and not too long ago. Philip read a short story by Tod Goldberg on Zoom during one of our pandemic-era events and he was interviewed by Jessica Laskey. That [interview](#) primarily concerned his discovery of acting.

But now, Philip is coming back as a featured writer, and I wanted to ask him about other aspects of his life, particularly about the story that's being read, "Triple." It's about a boyhood memory of baseball — a very common memory for a lot of men, particularly if they've participated in Little League.

Edited for length and clarity.

Sue: Philip, it's nice to see you again, and congratulations on having your story selected to be read. It's about a memory from your boyhood, as all the stories are, but it's one that seems to be really common for many men, at least if they've played baseball in Little League. Why do you think that is? What is it about baseball that's so compelling and so memorable?

Philip: Okay, that's an excellent question. Maybe because it's the first game you ever really played in an organized fashion? I think that might have had something to do with it, that and the uniforms and equipment. Today, it's probably been replaced somewhat by soccer, but when I was the age of my story, we didn't even know what soccer was. And then the coach was so influential on the kids. And also, the idea that for one brief moment, you either made that hit or that catch or you stole that base — it's a game punctuated by very specific actions that just burns itself into your brain, I think.

Sue: Well, that's true, baseball is like that. It's a whole lot of nothing then a brief flash of something, and so it probably does burn itself into a kid's brain. Do you still play any form of ball?

Philip: Not anymore. But yesterday, I spent the day with my seven-year-old grandson. And at his birth, believe it or not, I brought him a baseball. And when he was only two days old, I said "One day, buddy, you and me are going to be throwing this ball." And I think that time has come.

Sue: Is it the same baseball?

Philip: Oh, God, no. I have no idea what happened to that baseball.

Sue: So, after saying I didn't want to talk about your acting, I'm going to talk about your acting. When I was digging around on Google, I came up with your profile on IMDb that lists you as featured in a YouTube series called *Smosh*. What in the world is that?

Philip: (laughs) I didn't even know I was listed on IMDb!

Sue: Actually, you were in three episodes, and you play a priest. So, what is *Smosh*?

Philip: *Smosh* is — or maybe was, I don't even know anymore — a kind of an internet YouTube sensation. And it's all parody, created by two young guys — I tip my hat to them — who've got this great deal going. But everybody in it is kind of off, a little strange. One of the times that I was the priest, I married some superhero to this bride, and another evil superhero wants her or something. These were very brief little appearances within the episode, but it was kind of cool. Around that time, I had done some commercials out of San Francisco and I had some film time, but I decided I liked live stage better.

I enjoy the feedback you can feel coming from the audience, whereas a camera is just this cold, dead object, you know? It's just this eyeball looking at you. And you don't know if what you've just said or done has really impacted anybody.

Sue: You're still involved in acting?

Philip: Yes, with Placer Community Theater. I was the vice president of that for a number of years, stepped away for a while, but came back recently. We just did *Bus Stop*, and right now we are in rehearsal for our next play, which is *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. That one I'm producing.

Sue: I think you're from somewhere back East? How did you wash up in California?

Philip: I was actually born in Massachusetts, but my father was a career Air Force officer. So, I am from everywhere, which is actually a valuable education because it's the same planet and people can see the same thing but have completely different ideas about it. What I think that has taught me is to learn to listen, to understand a person's point of reference, so that you can communicate more effectively.

Sue: And I imagine you're putting that into practice as the manager of Auburn's community access television station, ACTV?

Philip: Right. I manage the station and I do videography. It's a child of the FCC. They have to provide two channels, essentially, for free for local programming. We have a "meet the artist" program and different kinds of talk shows, and the other programming is from other media stations that I download. The range is very limited — you have to have the specific broadband and you have to live within the city of Auburn in order to see this channel. I record those programs and put them on YouTube and Facebook to get a larger audience.

Sue: Sounds like fun!

Philip: It is. Theoretically, it's a part time job and the perfect retirement job for me. Because when I retired, after about 60 days, I was going crazy and just fell into the ACTV job. I get to express some creativity and I've learned how to do videography. I have improved my photography tenfold.

Sue: It sounds to me like another thing you fell into after you retired was writing. How long have you been writing, and is that another welcome outlet for your creative self?

Philip: Well, I was corresponding with someone for business who said I wrote very well, and through her I connected with Joan Griffin, who teaches memoir writing at Sierra College. Then, during the pandemic, the class took part in NaNoWriMo, where the idea is that you write 50,000 words in a month. And I got to 34,000 words. I was writing and learning to use description and character and scene and all of that stuff. I use my acting experience a great deal because I try to visualize the story I'm writing as if it was a play on stage, using all the elements of the stage: here's the scene and here come the characters. I try to see my writing as a play.

Sue: You're visualizing it as people moving through time and doing things, not as thoughts in your head. That's so helpful. So, you were a *Stories on Stage* reader, as I've said, but now you're a *Stories on Stage* writer and you have to sit in the audience and listen to your story being read by another actor. I was wondering how you feel about that. Are you anxious? Curious? Do you wish you were up there reading it yourself?

Philip: Well, the story won a contest, and Jessica and Joshua got in touch with me right away. And my first thought was, should I act it? And then I thought, no, I really shouldn't. Because here's another actor and I wonder, how he will he interpret my story? I'm really looking forward to seeing that. And that kind of goes back to the way I was raised. What is the other person's perspective? Hopefully, the story's as good as I think it is. Is the actor as good of an actor? I hope he is. But I'm just tickled beyond belief.

Sue: That's so good to hear. We're just about done, Philip. Anything you'd like to add?

Philip: I just wanted to say something about retirement: that it's not the end. Actually, it's the beginning of all of those things that you had to put away because you had to make a living. Right now, in my retirement, I'm doing all the creative things that I've always wanted to do. And I'm having a ball.

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