

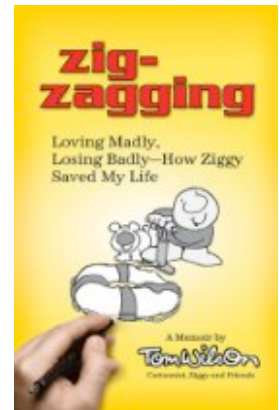


A special e-Interview brought to you by VickyandJen.com.

Here's an e-Interview we thought you'd enjoy and find inspiring!

Our e-Guest: Tom Wilson, Ziggy Cartoonist and author of the new book, [Zig-zagging: Loving Madly, Losing Badly How Ziggy Saved My Life](#). Tom centers his memoir on the journey he took with his young wife, Susan, after she was diagnosed with breast cancer. A battle she lost. Read it to see Tom's resolve to live happily, optimistically like Ziggy, as a single father raising his two sons.

Fun Facts: Ziggy first appeared in newspapers in 1971. Tom Wilson has drawn and written Ziggy since 1987, after the retirement of his father, the senior Tom Wilson, who first created Ziggy as a greeting card character. Ziggy is published in more than 600 newspapers, reaching 75 million readers daily, and maintains an online presence through www.Ziggyzone.com and www.uclick.com.



1. After so many years as a cartoonist, what made you want to write a book?

I initially intended to write a business book, based on my many years as a branding specialist and creative consultant, but that's not at all how things turned out. Much like ZIGGY himself, Zig-Zagging came to me unexpectedly and unfolded from a deeply personal place. It emerged from much of the journaling I had been doing, trying to understand and come to grips with the loss of my beloved wife to breast cancer. I didn't plan it that way, trust me, but life is full of surprises.

2. What was the biggest surprise that Zig-zagging managed to spring on you?

As I say in the first paragraph: "My initially simple and orderly plan for 'Bringing life to the character of your business' ended up becoming a personally chaotic journey about 'Bringing your character to the business of life.'" Along the way of trying to do just that I felt compelled to write a book that would allow me to connect with people I would otherwise never meet—just as Ziggy does—and not only commiserate over the greatest challenges we might all face in life, but find joy in even the small pleasures of living it fully after getting hit with the worst shots of fate that we never saw coming.



3. How did journaling help you work through your own challenges and do you think it could be beneficial for anyone else facing their own?

It certainly helped me but I can't speak for anyone else. In my own experience, journaling allowed me to pour out and record my own free-flowing raw thoughts and emotions in real time which enabled me to create a perspective outside of the situation I was dealing with. When I would revisit those journal entries and read what I'd earlier written, I was able to gain a better understanding of what I had actually been going through at the time. I found journaling to be a very positive means of self-examination and self-expression, allowing me to bring new light to some dark corners of my life. I think anything that can help us envision a brighter future for ourselves during the bad times is a very good thing.

4. Do you share some of your original journal entries in the book?

I do share some, but that wasn't my purpose when I wrote them since I had no idea at the time I would be writing a book. My journaling was originally intended to help me work through and gain some perspective over a life I felt no longer made any sense or still had any purpose. I hope that the particular journal entries I have chosen to share in Zig-Zagging may help others gain some clarity about difficult situations they might be dealing with themselves.

5. Zig-zagging has an interesting mix of some dark subjects such as death and depression, but also a lot of humor—some of it a little dark, as well. Was this a difficult balance to manage or something that came naturally to you?

Hmm...that funny balance between dark humor and light actually did seem to come naturally to me, at least once I finally gave up trying to control the creative process of writing a book instead of a cartoon. In the book I talk about "engaging the shadow" which comes from one of Leonardo da Vinci's art techniques and my own understanding "of that great intangible that can only exist within a perfect balance between darkness and light, the known and the unknown." Humor can cross both those lines and I hope that my own passion for it carries some inspiration to others who can use a good laugh—whether it's in the funny pages or a book of more substance. Mine does deal with some heavy issues but I'm a firm believer that laughter can be the best medicine for what ails us and I tried to be generous with it in Zig-zagging.



6. How do you handle the differences between the media of books and cartoons?

Both books and comic-strips are forms of art imitating life. Comic-strips tell their tale graphically “in the moment” (frame by frame), while books appear to reveal themselves to us at our own pace and in our own time. For me, handling the differences between the two really came down to my own perspective as a creator of two very different art forms which possess their own unique sets of pleasures and difficulties.

7. And what perspectives do you bring to your work?

As the creator for Ziggy, my job each day is to make sure Ziggy is never late for work (which is basically like the blind leading the blind) by creating a specific situation in to which I place him, pre-determining his response to that situation while also attempting to anticipate and foster an appreciation of this entire process with his readers. In essence, I get ultimate creative control over the art I bring to life for others to hopefully enjoy. As the author of Zig-Zagging, however, I eventually realized that I had to relinquish all control over a story with far greater purpose and meaning than I could ever have planned for in a comic strip—a very intimate story that was hell-bent on unfolding in its own sweet time and way, along its very own zig-zagging path to publication.

8. Does Ziggy play an important role in your book?

Definitely. I was twelve years old when my father created him in the late 1960’s, so Ziggy was always like a successful little brother to me. Then, when I assumed the responsibility of the cartoon nearly 25 years ago, my relationship with Ziggy took on a professional context as well. As for the role he plays in my book, yes there are cartoons with Ziggy helping to make certain points and provide some humor, but he emerged as a more central character to my story than I ever guessed he would.

9. In what ways did he surprise you?

For most of my professional life with him, I actually believed I was creating and guiding Ziggy through his daily challenges. It was only through the process of writing Zig-Zagging that my perspective on my own life and relationship to my own character began to change dramatically. I finally came to realize just how great a role Ziggy had always played in my existence, and how, when I felt most alone, he had been helping to guide me through my greatest challenge of all: Finding a way to overcome a crippling depression after losing my soul mate.



10. What's the central message of your story?

Well, we all meet unexpected detours and obstacles along the path we travel, which can completely throw our lives off track, leaving us feeling lost, alone and completely out of character and place with the life we've always known. I know this because I've been up and down that rough and rocky road...and through trying to find my own way back home, I've also found that we are never truly alone and that the only time any of us are ever really sure of where we're supposed to be is when we finally arrive.

11. Is there anything else you hope readers will take from your book?

When we feel that our life or our happiness has reached a dead end, come to a complete halt, it's important to understand that everything exists within a constant state of change and that the only thing that never actually changes is change itself. It's during those times that we need to look within ourselves to find something to carry us forward and lead us back to where we truly belong. In my case, what rescued me and took me back home was a short, fat little bald guy named Ziggy.

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