

15 MINUTES

Every day he writes the book

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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Writers like to hang out at Barnes & Noble, maybe drawing energy from all the condensed greatness. Franz Kafka and Ernest Hemingway overlook the coffee shop in mural form. George Orwell's "1984" is just steps away. Store clerk Chuck Myron counts that book as one of his favorites.

Mr. Myron, 29, is writing his own full-length, nonfiction book. A critique of how the media cover politics, it draws on his nearly 10 years in the newspaper industry.

"When I really started to get committed to this book," he says, "I said 'Even if it's just for 10 minutes per day, I'll mentally chain myself to that chair,' as if it were something as basic as brushing my teeth. (Writing) is just something I do on a daily basis..."

"A book is an intimidating thing, especially if you've never written one before," he adds. "So far, I feel like I have a pretty good manuscript. Right now I'm connecting the dots, finishing it up. Then I'll go into a revision stage."

Slated to be finished late this year, the book is in part about how Mr. Myron's view of journalism changed after he worked as a "mobile journalist" or "mojo" for *The News-Press* in Fort Myers. He was featured in a 2006

Washington Post story about this new style of reporting in which journalists write dispatches from their cars or wherever and file them directly to the Internet. Occasionally, the stories become hard copy in a newspaper.

A picture of Mr. Myron from the *Post* story shows him sitting in his grey Nissan with a laptop, phone pressed to his ear.

"That was part of the big thrust of mobile journalism," he says. "You can do it from your car."

As a mojo, there was pressure to produce stories every few hours, even if they were trivial. Material included: hunky fire fighters making a calendar, nursery school field trips and garage sales. At an elementary school pep rally for the FCAT, he reported on how "one of the drama teachers dressed up as a cat... He was an FCAT."

"I had the directive, 'If it's anything, it's news,'" he says.

He was required to publish four stories per day on *The News-Press* Web site, complete with cropped pictures and cutlines or live video.

"It was a struggle," he says. "I didn't want to cover stuff that wasn't news. It wasn't fun. It wasn't what I envisioned." What he had envisioned was something closer to classic journalism: investigative, public service pieces. Ones you didn't have to plug in to read.

Feeling burned out and stressed out, Mr. Myron left the job for health reasons. "There's only so long you

can work in your car," he says.

Originally, he had wanted to be a sports-writer. Growing up near the Appalachian Mountains in Kingsport, Tenn., he was a basketball fan. Kingsport was a "classic, one-company town" he recalls. "All the roads bottomed out at (Eastman Chemical Company). I wanted to leave, broaden my horizons."

He graduated from East Tennessee State University with a journalism degree and worked for small daily and weekly papers in Tennessee before driving his Nissan to Florida in 2004. He worked at a thrice-weekly paper in Sebring before coming to Fort Myers.

After leaving the newspaper business, Mr. Myron gained some perspective on it by working as a media coordinator for Jeff George, a Cape Coral resident who ran a congressional campaign against Connie Mack and others last year. "It was very enlightening to see it from the other side," he says.

Although his book is taking up a lot of his spare time, he's getting married



Chuck Myron

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in June.

Besides working at Barnes & Noble during the day, he maintains a blog about sports, www.timestopsforanoone.blogspot.com, and summons the higher powers of literature and journalism sometime after sunset. "In the great tradition of writers, I write about as close to midnight as possible," he says. ■

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