



## Retiree Embarks Upon 3rd Career as Full-Time Copywriter to Support RV Lifestyle

Melissa Gouty had always dreamed of becoming a full-time writer. “I was one of those kids who had her nose in a book and was always writing,” she says. “I loved making little books and stapling them together, writing poems and other little things.”

It wasn't until she was in her 60's, however, after two careers and a retirement, that she needed to make her writing dreams into a reality. She and her husband Phil wanted to travel in their RV, but they didn't have much money saved and still needed to earn an income.

Melissa wanted to earn that money writing, and she needed a way to do it.

As a girl, Melissa loved words. She earned a bachelor's degree in English, then got a master's degree and taught literature at a community college. After grading papers for 23 years, however, she was burned out and decided it was time to move on.

Her second career, an entrepreneurial venture, was quite a bit different than teaching. She and Phil purchased an abandoned 14,000 sq. ft. nursing home in a Midwest town, and remodeled the building as a retreat for people who sew, quilt, and do textile art.

Thanks to long hours and hard work over the years, they made the business a success. It had a retail store and a retreat center, and they regularly hosted industry gurus. People from all over the world came to stay overnight, make new friends, and take workshops from the experts.

### CASE STUDY:

## Melissa Gouty

*“AWAI made me believe that I could do this.”*

### MEMBER:

Melissa Gouty

### LOCATION:

Central Illinois/South Florida

### OTHER JOBS:

Community College Instructor,  
Entrepreneur/Sewing Retreat Creator

### HOW SHE GOT HER FIRST CLIENT:

Titanides Women's Copywriting Group

### TOP AWAI PROGRAMS:

- *FastTrack to Copywriting Success* Bootcamp and Job Fair
- *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*
- *Getting Clients*

Melissa enjoyed the business, but after 11 years, she decided it was time to retire.

“We had been in it a long time,” she recalls. “It was a 24 hour a day, seven day a week business. I worked almost every weekend, and we were often called in the middle of the night for various reasons. For example, three times we had someone run a sewing machine needle through their finger and I had to sit in the emergency room!”

Fortunately, the Gouty’s met a couple that wanted to buy their business, so they were free to move on to the next phase of their lives. Phil wanted to travel and Melissa wanted to write, but they also needed to bring in an income. Although self-employment at the sewing retreat center had been great in many ways, it had not allowed them to save much money.

Melissa knew that “retirement” for her would include working for several more years. She was happy to do it; she just had to figure out how she could make a living with her writing!

### *They Made Me Believe I Could Do This*

Because of her interest in words, Melissa had subscribed to a popular writing blog. As a result, she received what she describes as “one of those wonderful, persuasive sales letters” from American Writers and Artists Institute (AWAI), which directed her to a magazine called Barefoot Writer.

The magazine was inspiring, and recounted stories of people who were doing what she wanted to do, which was make a living writing. She realized that many people in the Barefoot Writer were copywriters, and that she also had copywriting experience going back to the sewing retreat center. She and Phil had put out a weekly newsletter, and it had been one of her favorite parts of the business.

Melissa decided that her experience with marketing, along with her English skills, made her a good candidate for copywriting.

“AWAI made me believe that I could do this,” she says. “They showed examples of people who were doing it, and I thought, ‘you know, I’m this far, this is what I want to do, and this organization seems like it’s at the right place at the right time.’”

### *She Found Her Tribe*

The Gouty’s sold their business at the end of 2017, and then took some time off to travel. Melissa investigated AWAI in 2018, then purchased *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*. By the time the 2019 AWAI *FastTrack to Copywriting Success Bootcamp* and Job Fair came around, she had done her homework and was ready to consider it.

The cost was a little more than she was comfortable with, and she recalls sitting in her camper with her pencil and paper, trying to figure out if it would be worth the investment. Looking back, she says it was worth every penny.

“It was the best decision I ever made,” she states emphatically. “Within a few minutes of walking into *Bootcamp*, I knew I had found ‘my tribe.’ Everybody there, every single person, was upbeat and smiley and personal and made you feel welcome. I learned so much from the speakers, and I didn’t miss a single session.”

She also says, “Another thing that was really important was being with people who were doing what I wanted to do and who understood what a writer’s life is. I met half a dozen people that I am still in close contact with. You can’t put a value on that.”



Melissa says her attitude when signing up for *Bootcamp* 2019 was, “I’m going to conquer this and learn everything I can.”

Part of her plan was to complete several spec assignments, which she did. She won three of them, which she says affirmed her decision to become a copywriter and fueled her creative fire.

In June of 2019, after *Bootcamp*, she took the test to become verified by AWAI and got to work finding clients.

Although she’s had success, she is quick to point out that it hasn’t necessarily come easy. For example, one of her first triumphs, a health company that hired her to write educational modules, became a disappointment when her project was canceled just two months after she started, through no fault of her own.

She found more work, however. In addition to the health company, she’s worked on various projects for other clients. These include articles, case studies, social media sets, SEO blogs, and more.

She was also just hired for a full-time, remote position with a large HVAC company in Florida. She’ll be generating content, managing their social media, designing promotional flyers, etc.

Finally, in addition to working for other people, she writes a lot of her own pieces and posts them to LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. She’s also pitched some of them to the *Professional Writer’s Alliance* and *Wealthy Web Writer*. “Being part of AWAI is a big help to becoming an established writer,” she says, “because people are willing to give you a chance.”

## *This Is What Success Looks Like to Me*

When asked if she’s successful, Melissa hesitates. Everyone has their own idea of success, and hers doesn’t involve earning a large amount of money.

She says, “I don’t have that feeling that I’m there yet, but I know I’m on the path. I want to make enough money for my husband and myself, who are retired and have no real income, to live a simple life, being able to travel around in our camper or stay home when we want to, for the rest of our lives.”

She adds, “I don’t expect or want a high-pressure corporate job. I just want to earn a living doing what I love, which is writing.”

Even with some disappointments, Melissa’s 3rd career is off to a great start. When asked to detail the best things about it, she doesn’t hesitate.

“I love everything about it! I love not having to commute. I love not having to dress up every day. I love not having to deal with office politics, or manage a staff like I used to. I love being able to write in my slippers, and take my dog for walks anytime. I can manipulate my hours, listen to my own music, and I don’t have to pay for expensive lunches. And although you can’t always guarantee clients, I’d still take it over a traditional job any day!”



## *Melissa's Tips For Copywriters*

- **Don't get discouraged if success doesn't happen as fast as you want it to.** Melissa has had some disappointments with clients, but she has learned a lot along the way. She was also in the position to get a full-time job offer!
- **Do the things everyday that will get you to where you want to go.** There are days when Melissa doesn't feel like writing, but she still blogs and writes articles because she knows it will help her business in the long-term.
- **Get involved with other members of AWAI.** Go to *Bootcamp* and join the Facebook group. Find your tribe!

## *Ready to Pursue the Writer's Life?*

Learn more about the event that helped launch Melissa's career,  
[\*\*\*The FastTrack to Copywriting Success Bootcamp and Job Fair.\*\*\*](#)

