



[Flying Pen Press](#) is pleased to present an interview with Dayton Ward, editor of the anthology [Space Grunts: Full-Throttle Space Tales #3](#). Dayton Ward is an author who lives in Kansas City with his wife and two daughters. His previous works include the science fiction novels *The Last World War* and *Protocol* and the Star Trek™ novels *In The Name Of Honor* and *Vanguard: Open Secrets*.

---

### **How did you select the authors for this anthology?**

Flying Pen Press had a number of authors with whom they'd worked on past projects and who they wished to see extended invitations to submit stories for consideration. I also had a rather lengthy list of writers I wanted to contact. All told, more than 100 invitations were extended. Of those about 90 expressed interest, though a smaller portion of that number qualified their responses with warnings that they might not be able to participate due to other commitments and so on. Still, I ended up with 52 stories to read when it was all said and done.

**How did you personally become interested in military science fiction?**

I've always been a fan of the genre. *Starship Troopers*, *The Forever War*, *Bill the Galactic Hero*, *Ender's Game*, *Legion of the Damned*, and *Old Man's War*, to name some titles off the top of my head, are all favorites of mine. I'm also former military, and as a consequence have a natural interest in military history and military fiction. I've written a few works of MilSF over the years, so when I was approached by Flying Pen Press to edit *Space Grunts*, I was intrigued by the challenge it offered.

**How do the different stories offer fresh looks at the theme of *Space Grunts*?**

Several of the stories offer fresh takes on what at first might seem to be a clichéd theme, that of “soldiers in space.” Though I like each of the stories in the book, “98 Hill,” “Across the Endless Sea,” and “Target Market” to name just three examples stood out because of how well the writers grabbed my attention and held it with commanding voice and evocative imagery. Better still, none of the three stories I'm citing is remotely like the other two. It went that way with the entire book, to be honest, which is one of the things I enjoyed about the process.

**How do you decide in what order to place the stories in the anthology?**

I already had a nice balance of stories—some that featured lots of action and/or were told from the POV of a military character “in the trenches,” and others focusing on other characters, set largely away from such situations. It wasn't a perfect division, but close enough that I decided to order them in such a way that they alternated between the two basic types of stories.

**Any interesting stories about the anthology as you were putting it together?**

I was told by David Rozansky that the initial responses I received when I sent out the author invitations surpassed the combined totals of the first two *Full-Throttle Space Tales* anthologies. It seems that every anthology has had a higher response rate than its predecessor, so I hope I did my part to bring some attention to the books and Flying Pen Press, and that interest in the next book in the *Full-Throttle* series blows mine out of the water.

**What were some of the surprises you encountered as you were compiling and editing this anthology?**

First and foremost, I was surprised by the response. My most hopeful estimates were to receive maybe 25-30 stories. I received twice that many. Next, I was excited by the level

of writing in the different stories. I can honestly say I didn't reject a story because it was badly written. There are always little things which need to be fixed, but that's just what I saw—little things. It came down to picking the stories which best observed the anthology's theme, and worked in concert with other selections to create a well-balanced volume. It was not an easy task by any means, but I welcomed the challenge the writers provided.

**What do you see as some of the advantages of the short story format over longer fiction formats, such as novels?**

There are stories that work better in a shorter, more focused format. I often get ideas for such tales, and after playing with them for a while I come to realize that fleshing it out into something that might work in a novel isn't always the best option. While I could do it, I run the risk of transforming the original idea in such a way that it doesn't really match up with whatever it was that gave me the initial creative spark.

**What advice do you have for someone who is just starting out as a writer of short fiction?**

Learn how to get to the point, and fast. Short fiction is all about grabbing the reader by the throat and pulling them down into your story from the first sentence, and not letting them up for air until they hit the last word. Sounds easy, but it's hard to do well.

Otherwise, my advice is the same as it would be for anyone wanting to write anything, and I'm going to paraphrase friend and author Geoffrey Thorne, who once offered one of my favorite bits of advice on this subject: Write. Suck. Write More. Suck less. Write a lot more. Suck a lot less. Repeat. Stop talking about it, and start doing it. Plant your butt in a chair, and start putting one word in front of another. There are no short cuts; there are no secrets for instant success. Write, write, and then write some more.