

Susie Bright FAQ

Is Susie Bright your real name?

Yes, it really is. I was born in 1958, when "Susie" was very popular. The Bright part is my paternal family name.

How many books have you written?

I've written eight books, and edited eighteen anthologies/novels. You can see my resume [here](#).

What do your parents think of what you do?

My father is my biggest fan and best editor. He's edited every book of mine, and offered great ideas all along the way. My mother has passed away, but she was very proud of me. Both of them were always interested in art, music, literature, history, and politics.

My aunt always said, "So you're a writer— Any Irishman can write. What else do you do?"

What do your children think of what you do?

I have one teenager, a daughter. She's proud of me, too, but at this age, she would rather not be dishing out any compliments.

I wrote a story once about how she asked me about my "job," when she was eight. You can read [here](#). It's part of my book, *["Mommy's Little Girl: Susie Bright on Sex, Motherhood, Pornography, and Cherry Pie."](#)*

To my own family, I'm not especially "sexy" or "shocking." My mom would have called me a bookworm, or shy. My daughter thinks I'm strict, and that I worry too much. They're both right!

Were you raised with a religious faith?

Lapsed Irish Catholic. I went to parochial school for 4th and 5th grade, and stopped believing in "God" around 1968— a very big year for that sort of thing.

Do you like writing or editing better?

I love them both. I originally wrote poetry and short fiction before I became a journalist or an editorial writer.

How did you begin writing?

My first publication was home-made. When I was 8, I was very upset about Ronald Reagan running for governor in California, and I wrote a pamphlet denouncing him in my orange-red crayolas and stuck copies of it all around the neighborhood. I signed them, "Concerned Citizens of California."

I always loved to write stories and poetry, it was my favorite part of school. I as a dedicated diarist and letter writer.

In high school, I became a radical and an activist, and I wrote for our campus underground newspaper, called "The Red Tide." I wrote about everything from narcs on campus to how to get free birth control. The principal regularly seized our newspaper, and in 1974, we sued the LA school board for the right to distribute our student paper without prior censorship or approval. We won in State Supreme Court, in 1977.

When did you first write about sex?

My first sex writing was in San Francisco in the early 80s, when I wrote a play called "Girls Gone Bad," and got involved in a group of queer artists called "Mainstream Exiles."

I began to write and read erotic poetry that was popular as well.

A woman approached after one poetry reading and asked me if I'd like to contribute to a new magazine called *On Our Backs--Entertainment for the Adventurous Lesbian*. I ended up becoming the editor of this new magazine, and our efforts became notorious.

In 1986, I was asked by *Penthouse Forum* if I would like to write a monthly erotic film review column. I quit my day job and devoted myself to subsidizing *On Our Backs*, which was influential but an financial hole.

I've been writing professionally as a freelancer ever since. My first collection of stories was [Herotica](#), and my first book of my own stories was [Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World](#).

Are you a lesbian or not? Don't you have a kid and a man in your life?

I'm bisexual, I always have been. My first sexual experience of any kind was with both a man and woman. I always thought that was an omen! However, I have long term relationships with one lover at a time, sometimes a woman, sometimes a man. I've been with my current partner, Jon, for over a decade, and we raise our daughter together.

Are you polyamorous, in an open marriage, or what?

I'm faithful to my mate, but it doesn't have anything to do with traditional physical fidelity. He's my family, my trusted companion and dearest lover; my daughter's father. I'm glad we both feel the same way!

Do you teach pornography, erotica, or writing classes?

Sometimes, yes. I teach a class called "The Politics of Sexual Representation," which I nicknamed "Porn 101." It was the first scholarly class ever taught about pornography.

How can I find out when you teach a class next, or make a public appearance?

[Subscribe](#) to my mailing list, and I will faithfully stay in touch!

I want to book you in my town to do an event of some kind...

Splendid! Contact [my booking manager](#).

Will you read my manuscript and help me get it published?

I work as a book doctor/consultant on certain projects that I get excited about. Write me if you'd like more info. Please put: "Writer/Editor Consult" in the Subject Line.

Do you perform in movies or on TV?

I have studied and worked as an actress and model, most frequently in my own works.

I've done a lot of theater, as a director, writer, and actor.

The film roles I have had have been quite small— I like being the screenwriter more than the performer! You can see me featured in *The Celluloid Closet*, *The Virgin Machine*, *Bound*, and the last season of *Six Feet Under*.

I have cameos in the Mitchell Bros. "*G Spot*," and *Behind the Green Door 2*, but if you blink, you'd miss me.

I composed the sex scenes in *Bound* and wrote the American story for *Erotique*.

I've worked and written behind the scenes on a lot of independent erotic movies, but I've never been a "porn star."

In 2003, I was voted into the X-Rated Hall of Fame, for my journalism about the sex industry and erotic filmmaking.

Are you going to do any more movies or TV?

I hope so. I'd love to write more, create projects, produce and direct. I like to see my words on a page come to life!

Writing is more satisfying to me than acting. I don't like acting for the screen much at all. Live audiences are different!

Have you always been so open about sex?

Since I was in high school, when I got introduced to radical politics about most everything, I have been quite frank about sexuality. I was appalled when I found out that masturbation was not some secret hold that the Devil had over me. I couldn't believe all the lying about sin and sexuality that I had been taught as a child. Once I wised up, I became quite intolerant of sexual hypocrisy.

From there, I became interested in the way the erotic mind works, and how sexuality, politics, and culture feed off each other.

How do you handle sex questions with your kid?

I don't lie, and I don't do the lies of omission that were so popular in my growing up.

Sometimes I don't know the answer, but I usually have an idea about how to find out, and I'm very willing to help her. I try to DO the right thing instead of just SAYING it, which is a lot harder, of course.

I wrote a story about [Parenting](#) for my book [Full Exposure](#), you might be interested in.

The most enlightening thing I ever read about teaching kids about sex is a book called "[The First Book for Kids about Sex](#)." It is the only book for kids about sexuality that isn't about reproduction and disease— it's about the "everything else" of sexuality. I would actually recommend it to any adult.

I've seen you in person and you looked so ordinary... I was expecting a leather Catwoman suit and a bullwhip. Are you in disguise or what?

I love costumes, but I don't live in one. I'm one of those people who "cleans up real nice," but otherwise, you'd never notice me in a crowd. I enjoy the idea of being a full-time glamor girl, but in real life I have no patience for it.

Besides, I'm not Catwoman all the time, sometimes I'm just a pussycat.

I do love to sew, so if you see me in anything *really* weird, I probably made it.

Is your sex life as wild and crazy as it seems from reading your books?

I haven't lied about any of my adventures that you read about in my stories.

But I'm sorry to say, like most people, I work too hard and don't play enough.

I've also lived for almost half a century... so I've had some time to see what's what.

I haven't set any records; that's not my style. I'm a romantic, and I get lost in day-dreams like any child. I think everyone's imagination is "wild and crazy," and mine is one modest entry in a crowded field.

Are you a feminist?

Yes. Feminism at its root is pro-sexual, pro-body, pro-intellectual, and absolutely brazen.

I've never heard of feminists who like sex... are you the only one?

I never would have dreamed that feminism would one day become associated with our political correctness or protectionism. What a racket.

I am surrounded by sisters in common. My friend Annie Sprinkle made a photographic card deck featuring 52 of her best outrageous women friends, all of whom would have no problem calling themselves feminists in the same breath as calling themselves pornographers, carnal goddesses, brilliant whores, sluts on a mission.

What's the difference between porn and erotica?

I've written a lot about this question, especially in my books [Sexwise](#), [The Sexual State of the Union](#), and [Full Exposure](#).

Here's a personal story about this question, called "[My First Dirty Picture](#)."

What's your favorite erotic movie? Book? Author?

I write about my new favorites in my blog on a regular basis.

I wrote about my erotic literature classics in my book, [How To Write A Dirty Story](#).

Did you start the magazine "On Our Backs"? Are you still working there?

I co-founded "On Our Backs" with Nan Kinney, Debi Sundahl, Myrna Elana, and Honey Lee Cottrell. I left the magazine in 1990, and can't answer any questions about it since then.

"On Our Backs" was the first magazine by women about sex. It was the first openly lesbian magazine about anything, and it featured the first erotic women's photography ever published in a magazine. We were the first people to publish a national magazine

using entirely desktop publishing!--- on the very first Macs, and with the first version of Pagemaker.

If you can find a back issue from one of the years I was there 1984-1989, you've got yourself a treasure.

Whatever happened to all the great photos from "On Our Backs?"

In 1997, I co-authored a book, [Nothing But The Girl](#), with Jill Posener which is an homage to the lesbian photographers who literally created the lesbian erotic image, most of whom I met during my years at OOB. It's a big beautiful photo book of all my favorite artists and pictures.

I heard that you used to be a socialist and a union organizer... What's up with that?

Yes, the underground newspaper I was part of as a teenager, "The Red Tide," was a combination of socialists, anarchists and yippies. Eventually I dropped out of high school and joined a group called the International Socialists, who were dedicated to rank and file organizing in several major labor unions.

I worked as an organizer in Teamsters, and was one of the founding members Teamsters for a Democratic Union. I was first arrested, actually, on a UPS picket line, for telling a supervisor that he was a little prick. I was charged with disorderly conduct and condemned by a Michigan judge who called me a "menace to society." I hope I've done him proud.

Did you go to college?

Yes, after my political group broke up. I had sworn on a stack of Communist Manifestos I would never go to college, so in the beginning, I was quite chagrined. As it turned out, I had wonderful teachers and experiences in school; I'm really glad I attended. Not to mention life-long friends! When I was 19, I started at Cal State Long Beach, in Women's Studies and Theater, and then I transferred to U.C. Santa Cruz, where I got my degree in Community Studies. I am currently enrolled in the MFA program at New College.

What was it like working at Good Vibrations?

It was the first wage job I ever enjoyed. I worked there from 1982-1986.

When I first worked there, it was little bigger than a closet, and I had only a few customers all day. There was lots of time to talk to people about their sexual concerns and ideas, and I read every single book in our library. My boss, Joani Blank, is a brilliant sex educator, and I learned a lot from her.

The other side of retail is, it is no more fulfilling to count buttplugs in an inventory review than it is to count pencils. Customers can be rude anywhere; the pay isn't very good. I'm fortunate to be able to work full time as a writer nowadays.

When did you start writing about porn? Are you the first woman to do that?

I was the first journalist to write about the porn business, and porn movies, for the mainstream press.

When I joined the "X Rated Critics Organization" in the mid-80s, it was all men. The only magazines that ran stories about porn movies were "dirty" magazines. It was such a different climate than today.

I was the first critic to look at porn as if there was something to learn from it besides how to give a blow job. In a way, I was just doing what Andrea Dworkin was doing—taking porn seriously—except I came to different conclusions.

Do you ever get sick of talking and writing about sex?

No. Sex is like language or science, it's an infinite topic of possibilities and interpretations. I love to think and talk about humanity, and sex is always going to be in the center of that.

Does sex work ruin your own personal sex life?

I haven't found that to be the case. I wrote about this quite a bit in my book, [Full Exposure](#).

You can read my [introduction](#), where I talk about sex and one's personal life.

I don't think it's the "sex" in sex work that is the bummer, I think it's the stigma, the often criminalized nature of it, that gets people burnt out.

Sex workers often live with prejudice, secrecy, and disrespect. Because I came at it from the feminist counterculture, I luckily avoided that.

How can I get my own erotic writing published?

Here's my [letter](#) about how to publish your erotic writing.

How do you choose the stories for *The Best American Erotica*?

Here's the [Writer's Guidelines](#) for BAE.

Do you write a regular column somewhere?

I [blog](#) most every day.

I produce and host a weekly internet audio show for Audible, called "In Bed with Susie Bright." You can check it out [here](#).

I've written regular columns in the past for *BUST*, *Playboy Online*, *Salon*, *The San Francisco Review of Books*, *Penthouse Forum*, *Libida*, and *On Our Backs*.

When do you go on tour?

I've gone on tour each time I've published a new book. Sometimes I get invited to speak at universities, which usually happens in the spring and fall while school is in session. Please [subscribe](#) to my newsletter to get current tour info.

How do you decide where to go?

I want to go everywhere I haven't been, and I love to travel and see old friends. If you have an organization or group that would like to invite me to speak or perform, please contact my [manager](#).

More questions?

Got a comment or question you want answered? You can write to me at susie@susiebright.com. Please write "FAQ Question" in your subject line. Or, snail mail me at POB 8377, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.