

# WESTERNER

ISSUE NO. 1 //  
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THE PREMIER WESTERN CULTURE MAGAZINE

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*Cover photo credit: Brezinski Photography*

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The Westerner©

Philadelphia, PA, USA

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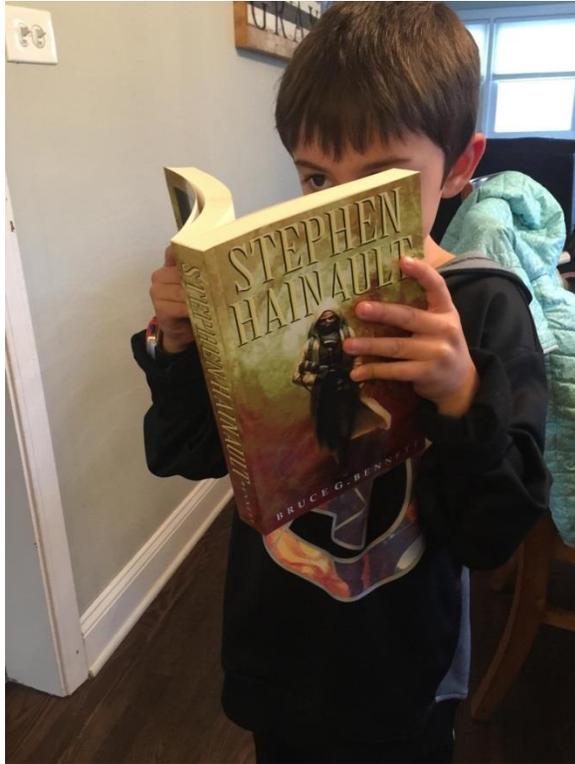
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE WESTERNER©



### REGARDING OUR INTERVIEW WITH DIANE FRANKLIN IN FEBRUARY'S WESTERNER©

Dear Sir or Madam:

I've been a fan of Diane Franklin since the early eighties and was excited to see the great interview with her in your magazine. I had the chance to meet her in person at a Comic-Con and got her autograph on a book.

When is the new book going to be coming out? Is your company publishing the new one? Do you know if Diane has an appearance schedule for this year? My friends and I would like to get her autograph,

but we don't know if she's coming back to Pittsburgh.

Do you have another interview planned with her? I really wanted to ask whether being in such a spooky movie, like Amityville Horror II, spooked her out. Would it be possible for you to have another interview and have fans ask questions?

Thanks again for the article and please have her back in the future.

Rob from Monroeville, PA

*Rob,*

*Thanks for the kind letter. We received so many responses commenting on Diane Franklin's interview that we just couldn't print them all.*

*The best way to keep up with her is through social media. Her Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/diane.franklin.566>.*

*We've not discussed another interview but would be delighted to have her back.*

*BB*

### A FAN OF ALEX CORD ON HIS FEBRUARY INTERVIEW

Dear Westerner Editor,

I was a huge fan of Airwolf and love Alex Cord. When I saw your interview with him, I nearly died. How was I supposed to know he

was a writer now too? I just bought a new Kindle, and I got his new book.

If you're talking with him again, could you tell him I think he's one of the handsomest men alive! He might remember meeting me one time in Los Angeles at Spago. If he did, I would just die. My friend, Stacy, loves him too.

Is there any way you could print more pictures of him in your magazine? If you did, I don't know what I would do. Thanks to you all.

Terri K. from Palm Desert, CA

*Terri,*

*Thank you for your nice letter. Alex receives a good number of fan letters daily and tries to read them all. However, your letter to the editor reflected the feelings of many people who wrote.*

*He's got a great memory, and I'm sure he'd remember you. In the meantime, look for more great books from Alex.*

*BB*

### **KUDOS ON THE GREAT NEW FORMAT!**

Dear Westerner,

I think the new magazine is great. I've been a western fan since the days of *Gunsmoke* and *The Big Valley*. It's great to learn more about the authors who are writing westerns today. My brother and my family tell me that I'm a

pretty good author. I wonder how I can get started in the business?

Meantime, do you think you can have Ralph Cotton or Seth Nation in the magazine? Those guys are the best, and I have all their books. How can I get them autographed? Great job, you cowboys!

Martin R. from Grand River, KS

*Martin,*

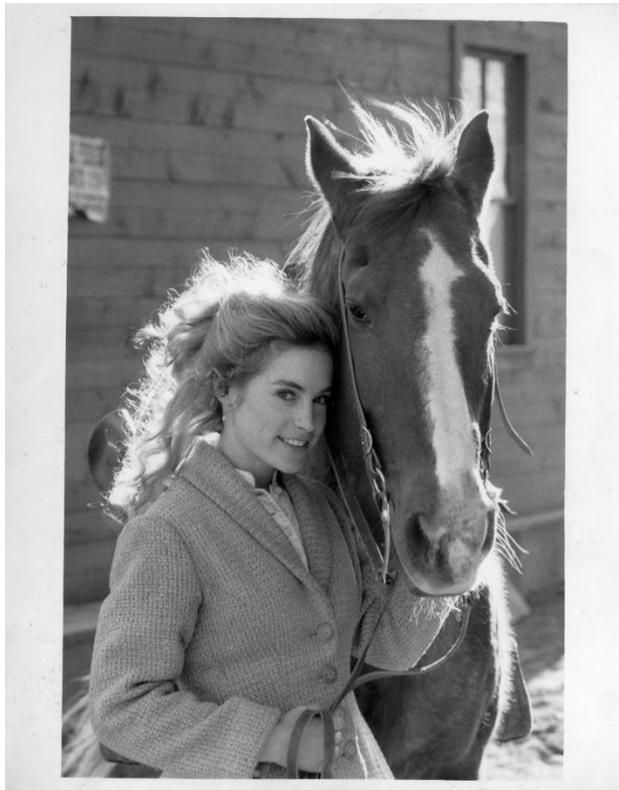
*It's great to hear from a real Western fan. Your question on Ralph Cotton and Seth Nation is timely. We have excerpts from both in this issue of the Westerner©. We think those guys are great and can't get enough of them. As far as appearances, we'll try and get a schedule together of where these authors will be signing books for future magazines. Thanks for the great idea!*

*If you need information on how to start in the book industry, contact Nick Wale at [dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com). He'll be glad to set you on the right path, pardner.*

*BB*

*Write to the Westerner© with your comments and have your letter printed here. Letters can be addressed to [dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com).*

**FUN TIMES WITH  
BEAUTIFUL AND  
TALENTED ACTRESS  
AMANDA WYSS**



Movie lovers will immediately recognize Amanda for her work in iconic films such as: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Silverado*. She continues to offer her significant talent to projects such as *The Watcher of Park Avenue*, *Big Legend*, and *It Happened Again Last Night*. Virtual reality fans can also catch her in the short *360 Degrees of Hell*.

I caught up with Amanda by Skype at her Hollywood office and barraged the accomplished actress with questions over her first cup of coffee. I found her to be

enthusiastic and totally enjoyable. Here is the open and honest interview that resulted:

*With Bruce Bennett, Editor of the  
Westerner*©

Amanda: Hello! How are you?

Bruce: Great, I hope this is a good time. Are you on the west coast?

Amanda: Yes, in Hollywood. Where are you?

Bruce: East coast, outside of Philadelphia.

Amanda: I love Philadelphia. I was just on the east coast in Pittsburgh.

Bruce: We have sort of a cross state rivalry with Pittsburgh.

Amanda: I know, but the architecture in Philadelphia is extraordinary. That's why everyone wants to film there because it's so unique.

Bruce: Philadelphia has had a rebirth over the past few decades. When I was growing up, it went through a period of time, when factories and business moved out. That was rather bleak.

Amanda: It's the same with LA. I remember a time when my parents described downtown LA, in the forties and fifties, as being vibrant and vital. When I was growing up, there was no life in downtown. Now, all the old warehouses have been converted into lofts. There's little villages all over the place. People are living there, and I can't imagine, if I was in my twenties, I'd be saying, "I have to live downtown."

When I was young, there wasn't a downtown in Los Angeles that you could go to. There were very few theaters or restaurants. Now there's almost too much building, not just downtown, but all over LA. In the recent election there was a referendum on whether the building should be stopped. In some ways it's good, but we keep tearing down the old. We'll see what happens.

Bruce: Hollywood must have been something back in its heyday.

Amanda: Every book, and what my parents would tell me, there was a red car system – trolleys – that went everywhere. They went to the beach, up and down the coast. Sunset Boulevard was beautiful, filled with beautiful restaurants and clubs. Back then it was very open. There were orchards and oil fields. Just a lot of open space. My dad asked my mom to marry him on a bluff overlooking the city. It was a beautiful spot; it was where all the teenagers went before they went off to war to kiss their girlfriend.

Then there is the valley, which is where I live, [that] was all farms, ranches, and more orchards. People would come to the valley for a weekend getaway. It all seemed so civilized.

Bruce: So tell me, what are you doing with yourself today?

Amanda: These days I'm working, I do a lot of yoga, I like to cook and entertain, I sit and read books all day when I have the opportunity. I love the ocean, I grew up on the beach. I travel a lot. I travel a lot for work, going on location. A couple of times a

year, I try to go somewhere I've never been. I've been working on some fun projects. That's been exciting.

Bruce: What projects are you working on?

Amanda: I just finished a project, a film called *Big Legend*, a creature feature. It's a supernatural horror/thriller written and directed by Justin Lee. Sunday, I'm going to the premier of a movie I did called *It Happened Again Last Night*. It's about a young girl, I play her mother, who's in an abusive relationship. It's a powerful story, it's a female driven story, co-directed by Gabriel Stone and Rosie Roze.

I have another movie coming out called *The Watcher of Park Avenue* where I play Detective Warren. It was fun to play such a strong character. It's a spooky thriller, written and directed by a young filmmaker named Ryan Burton. Same with *Big Legend*. It's directed by Justin Lee, another talented young man.

I'm slated to do a movie called *Catch a Fallen Star*, about a country-western singer. I'm excited about this one. I play the ex-wife of a country singer fallen on hard times. It's a beautiful story about family, redemption, and country music. I have a horror film coming out called *The Hatred* and a supernatural-paranormal film *The Capture*.



Right now, I have a virtual reality horror short playing on Samsung 360 that's kind of cool because it's one of the first narrative virtual reality horror shorts. We filmed in a haunted hotel adventure space. It's a real haunted hotel that people go to. It was hair-raisingly scary. The movie is cool. It's myself and a really talented young actress named Lauren Compton who go to find our family members who'd disappeared in this hotel.

It was fun to do, and I hope I have the opportunity to do more VR, because it was really interesting and fun to learn a new technique. They're supposed to make a couple more, so I'll be interested in doing that. Then I have a movie streaming now, that's my favorite role to date, called *The ID*. It's streaming on Amazon, iTunes, and hard copy Netflix.

It was a labor of love, and the reviews have been very kind. It's a psychological thriller directed by Thommy Hutson who produced the *Never Sleep Again* documentaries about the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise. I hope to work with him again. It was his first foray into directing, and he did a really good job.

That brings us up to today, and I'm sitting here talking to you.

Bruce: You were involved in a time when there were many teen movies and it seemed, to me, like the same actors were getting a lot of work in these movies, which appealed to a young audience. You were in a few of the most iconic movies of the time. Tell me how that happened?

Amanda: In the 80s, when I started, I went to drama school, and I did a couple plays in Los Angeles, which got me an agent. I played Rhoda in *The Bad Seed*, and I played Flora in *The Innocents*. They both were classic horror/drama plays that were a sign of things to come in my film career for sure.

I was swooped up by an agency, and I started auditioning for films and TV and was lucky enough to be cast in quite a few. Of course, I auditioned for movies I didn't get like *Valley Girl*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and a handful of others. There were movies I got close to but didn't get. I was close to *Top Gun*, by luck of the draw I landed a few key roles.

It never occurred to me, while filming them, that thirty years later the third generation of fans would still like those movies. I find it extraordinary and part of my legacy from

*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Better Off Dead*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Silverado*, even to an extent *Pow Wow Highway*, which was the last film produced by George Harrison.

I didn't see any of it coming, didn't expect it. The *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise—it's amazing to me that so many people identify with such a scary monster, played by the brilliant Robert Englund. My twenty minutes of film have been on the Oscars twice. A photo of Wes and me filming the death scene hung in the Director's Guild for many years. It's on many lists of top one-hundred death scenes.



*Better Off Dead*. Interestingly enough, the *Better Off Dead* fans and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* fans intersect somehow. They're also on the third generation. People will come up to me and say their parents had been turned on to *Better Off Dead* by their parents. I think that's amazing. Or people say that their family watches *Better Off Dead* at Christmas time together.

Then *Fast Times*, that's the American Graffiti of its generation. To get to your other point, everybody from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* has gone on to be a steadily

working character actor – like myself – or a huge movie star. Obviously, Amy Heckerling had excellent taste – she picked people she thought were really talented. She's a fantastic woman and an amazing director. I admire her and respect her a lot.

Wes Craven, Savage Steve Holland (who directed *Better Off Dead*), Lawrence Kasdan (who directed *Silverado*), their eye for talent was just extraordinary.

Bruce: Did you ever get a chance to watch Sean Penn do his scenes in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*?

Amanda: I did, and he also came in to watch me do my scenes. He's very curious. Good actors are curious. It's fun to watch other actors act. Everyone worked really hard. Even though it was a comedy, it had those dark undertones, and we took our work seriously.

Bruce: Did you realize that this was a guy who would become a big movie star?

Amanda: I wish I was psychic, but as a teenager I didn't think like that. I wasn't thinking about who was going to break out, but he's incredibly talented. He's so alive and raw, and unpredictable, which makes him incredibly fun to watch on film. He's just in it in a very truthful way that takes you there.

Bruce: With so much competition, at the time, did you find it difficult to find parts?

Amanda: No, it wasn't too difficult. I did the movies and a lot of television. I was always working and was represented really well by an agency that worked hard for me. So I had

a lot of opportunity. Even the things I didn't get, I got close to them. I was in a lot of plays, acting class, I still go to class for tune-ups and to get my creativity flowing again.

I was always surrounded by actors around my age who were working. The majority of my close friends are from that era. Heather Langenkamp [and] Diane Franklin, are two of my closest friends. I met them when we were kids doing those movies.

Bruce: I'm interested in the virtual technology project you did. I don't have a pair of glasses, but it seems, to me, this is an area that will exhibit tremendous future growth.

Amanda: It is. It's growing in leaps and bounds. When it first came out, they could really only do a short form. It's really amazing. Just so you know, I haven't seen it with glasses. I've only seen it when you hold your phone in the air and look like a crazy person. Actually, many things I've done I've never seen. Someday I'll see it in virtual reality. I love when people tell me that they've seen it and try to describe it to me.

Bruce: While you were talking, I got a mental picture of people walking around Times Square while holding phones in the air and running into each other. You know what I mean?

Amanda: [laughs] Yes, that's exactly what watching it in 360 is. You're waving your phone around trying to see all the things. I was out with a group of friends and somebody said, "Let's see it." So here was a

group of adults in a nice restaurant with phones in the air trying to watch this thing.

Can we go back to when you said, in the eighties, they made big ensemble movies?

Bruce: Sure.

Amanda: I have a theory about that. I don't know if it has legs, but I think in those days studios would put a lot of money into teen movies. There was an explosion of them. And they were movies geared toward teenagers. They weren't adult films with kids in them. They were kid films with adults in them.

I was just on a panel where we were asked about the continuing popularity of those eighties movies, and I said they were written well, produced well. The biggest reason was the advent of VHS. With this new technology, people could commonly own and watch a movie any time they liked. Those films became a part of people's lives. Those 80s movies became the first films viewed.

The nineties brought a proliferation of indie movies. The indie world has a different vibe. I think they're edgier. They're just different. I love making indie movies and feel at home in the indie world.

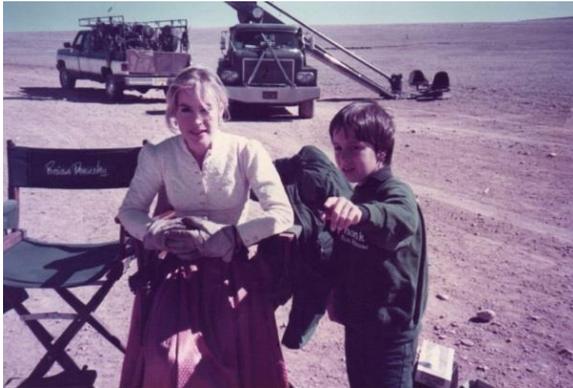
Bruce: In one of your movies, you worked with one of my favorite actors of all time.

Amanda: Wait, do I have to guess the movie too? [laughs]

Bruce: If you guess the movie, you'll get the actor.

Amanda: Kevin Costner in *Silverado*.

Bruce: You guessed the movie right but got the wrong Kevin.



Amanda: Kevin Kline! Isn't he just lovely? You love *Silverado*? Me too. Beautiful script, beautiful music by Bruce Broughton, amazing cast, and beautiful location. It's such a wonderful story of family, friendship, love, and – well - gunfights. [laughs] *Silverado* was hands down the most fun I had making a movie. All we did was laugh and have fun and say those beautiful words Lawrence Kasdan wrote.

Literally, it was the happiest and most fun I've ever had making a movie. Most people who worked on it say the same thing. I'm so glad you loved that movie! It makes me so happy.

Bruce: I like Westerns.

Amanda: I've done a couple of Westerns. I did a pilot for a TV show, that didn't get sold, called *Independence*. It was really good, but at the time around 1987, it was too expensive to produce. Then I played Lizzy Tewksbury in *Gunsmoke to the Last Man*. It was a TV movie about the real life feud between the Tewksburys and the Grahams. It was phenomenal and so much fun. I'm a huge fan of Westerns.

Then *Pow Wow Highway*, which isn't a Western but it's about this native American on a vision quest was also shot in the southwest. Sante Fe is such a beautiful place to shoot. The sky is cerulean blue, the mountains are purple and red, and the way the clouds come through is breathtaking. It looks beautiful on film.



I'm so glad you like *Silverado*. You know I got to work with the best of the best: Kevin Kline is brilliant, Jeff Goldblum, Scott Glenn, Roseanna Arquette, oh my God! Linda Hunt. Danny Glover, the sublime Lynn Whitfield, Ray Baker, Jeff Fahey, Todd Allen, the list goes on and on. Oh, Kevin Costner! I forgot to mention him.

You know what was fun? Lawrence Kasdan had just finished *The Big Chill*, so we got to see that movie. I would have loved to have been in that movie, but I got to be in *Silverado*. The cast is freakishly amazing.

Bruce: I have to tell you that I'm pleased that you're such a nice and receptive person. After you dumped Brad in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, I had my worries.

Amanda: [laughs] You know, early on I was cast as a mean girl who dumped boys, or I got killed. It was one of those two things.

Television sort of saved me. I got to play more diverse roles.

Bruce: Many fans seem to think that actors are really the part they play. I know you get the chance, these days, to meet fans. I wonder how they react to you?

Amanda: It's different because Beth, let's say, from *Better Off Dead*, wasn't necessarily nice – but the boys seem to like her. I played a murderous vampire in a series of movies people thought were funny. On TV, on CSI for instance, I recurred as a serial killer. On *Murder in the First*, I recurred as a sympathetic killer. So I'm all over the map, and I'm not sure anyone expects me to be a certain way.

My movie that's out now, *The ID*, is a raw psychological thriller about a woman who's the caretaker for her father. It touches on some pretty hard topics. But some people who meet me after that say, "Whoa, you clean up nice."

I haven't had too many people tell me I'm nicer than the characters I play. They might be thinking it, but I haven't had too many people say it. [laughs]

Bruce: What do you want for your career moving forward?

Amanda: I'd like people to watch *The ID*. I'd like people to see it, even if they aren't horror fans. That's happening now.



In the future, I'd really love to work with filmmakers who want to tell stories that resonate. Like *Silverado* where you feel lifted and alive. I'd like to keep exploring strong women character roles, like *The ID*. Like the role I have in *The Watcher of Park Avenue*, which is coming out soon.

I'd like the opportunity to do more character work, like the women I admire so much. Like Jessica Lange who's always doing amazing character work and now is doing such interesting things on *American Horror Story*. Lynn Shea—there are so many powerful and strong actresses I admire.

I'd also like to continue working with young filmmakers who are developing interesting new stories. There are so many directors working of whom I'm a fan. I hope to cross career paths with them. I love being a part of bringing a script to life.

Bruce: Roles for women have changed over the time you've been acting. How have those changes affected you?

Amanda: In all the time I've worked, I've worked with a total of six female directors. Six is not a very big number. I think there's been movement toward female-centric films, but overall there's still not many female

producers. I believe there'd be an interesting balance in the business if there were more female producers and directors.

There's been progress, but very slow. I celebrate the progress that has occurred. *The ID* was a total female-centric film. It was the best role I ever had and the most creative process I've had on a film, but those roles don't come along often.

Bruce: There are channels on television that are specifically geared toward the female audience. I know, because I sneak a peek sometimes.

Amanda: Hallmark is awesome. They produce some fun series and movies. I've wanted to be in a Hallmark Christmas movie since I started in the business. I can't understand why it hasn't happened. Is that too much to ask? [laughs] I just want to be in a Hallmark Christmas movie. I binge them over the holidays.

They're very female-centric in their programming. There's some amazing women directing TV right now. It's just a different point of view. Anyway, I like watching the Hallmark channel too.

Bruce: I appreciate all the honest replies to my questions. The manner in which we progress is a process, and sometimes people are careful to keep opinions to themselves.

Amanda: Sometimes I read a quote I've made in an article and ask myself if I really believed that at the time. I think my tastes change, but not my moral compass. I like when people are honest with me, and I like being truthful as an actor. Or, at least, I try to be.

Bruce: I want to thank you for taking the time to interview today. Our readers will love hearing about your current work and reminiscing about past performances – especially in *Silverado*.

Amanda: I'm so pleased you asked me. You know, my family has a ranch in southern New Mexico. I'm the least equestrian of the family but a really good stall mucker. I muck the stalls and feed the horses – but I'm not as good at riding as my siblings.

Bruce: You know, that's the job I have around here. Being a stall mucker, that is.

Amanda: The world needs stall muckers, and you and I are stall muckers and that's fine.

Bruce: Thank you, once more, for being so gracious.

Amanda: It was a pleasure. I look forward to reading the article.



Send us a letter telling us how you enjoyed this article at [dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com).

**GO WEST, YOUNG MAN!  
FINDING ADVERTISING  
GOLD WITH  
ADMAN/MADMAN FRED  
GOLDBERG**



With Westerner© Editor Bruce Bennett

*Fred Goldberg's book "[The Insanity of Advertising: Memoirs of a Mad Man](#)," Hardcover 2014 by Council Oak Books, is an insider's tell-all on an industry that has been lionized in movies and on television. What is the advertising industry really like, and what was it like to be on the inside in the golden days of the Silicon Valley?*

*There are unique perspectives of people, westerners all, like Steve Jobs (APPLE), Jay Chiat (Chiat/Day), John Chambers (CISCO), Al Davis (Oakland Raiders), Ernest Gallo (Gallo Wines), Larry Ellison (Oracle), Andy Grove (Intel), Harris Kattleman (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox), Don Kingsborough (Worlds of Wonder), Les Crane (Software Toolworks), David Norman (Businessland) Gary Rogers (Dreyer's Ice Cream), John Sculley (APPLE), Doug*

*Thompkins (Espirit), Jack Tramiel (ATARI) and others. There is a chapter devoted to maybe the most quintessential westerner of all, "The Duke," John Wayne.*

*After reading the book, I had the opportunity to interview Fred and get his slant on the times, opportunities, and failures of heroes and legends of American industry. How did Steve Jobs really feel about the 1984 Macintosh ad, and what happened when Worlds of Wonder's Don Kingsborough took the first Teddy Ruxpin ad home to show his wife?*

*It's all in the thoroughly entertaining book, which is accompanied by great illustrations and loaded with anecdotes on the giants of industry, some portrayed in movies and television today. Here is what transpired when I caught up with Fred Goldberg at his California home this March:*

Bruce: Great book. I thoroughly enjoyed the read.

Fred: Thank you. It's the result of compiling written material, memos, e-mail, over a period of about forty years. And many years spent getting it all down, along with the memories. An important portion of the book is devoted to those years when most of the truly great advertising being developed in the country was coming from the ad agencies on the west coast. Setting standards and creative breakthroughs.

Bruce: Wow. When you started in the business, did you know you'd eventually write a book?

Fred: I think I recognized two things when I first started in the advertising business. The

first was the business was so crazy that someday I'd want to write about it. The second was that I needed to keep good records in case I had to defend myself later. This second was fortuitous as a client actually tried to sue me and, luckily, I had kept immaculate records of our interaction. It also helped me keep people a bit more honest over the years.

Bruce: You grew up in New York...

Fred: That's taking for granted I grew up. [laughs] In fact, working in Manhattan actually did grow me. It hardened and shaped me. It served me quite well when I finally arrived on the west coast.

Bruce: What I mean is: New York Madison Avenue is the Mecca for advertising agencies. Is this something you knew you wanted from an early age?

Fred: [laughs] Absolutely not. I was on my way to be a doctor, a neurosurgeon. I was in my second year in pre-med at the University of Vermont when I realized things weren't going to work out. My cumulative average was low – mostly due to overabundant card playing. But somehow I went on to graduate school at NYU with a concentration on marketing and psychology.

Still, I didn't consider advertising as a career path. Instead, I wanted to be a management consultant. I tried to get in at Booze Allen, Hamilton, McKinsey Bain, and others, but couldn't even buy an interview. I finally got a job with the P. Ballantine & Sons Brewing Company in New Jersey. It was there that I first got interested in advertising.

The company bought advertising from three different firms. One of them, Young and Rubicam, offered me a job with their firm. Even then, it was in marketing and not as an account executive. It wasn't long before I figured out my path to success. I switched over to account management and was with the company for fifteen years.

Bruce: What was the best move you made in your career?

Fred: Coming west. It was a land of opportunity, a new frontier, even then. From there on, my life was mostly like a Cinderella story. But it didn't start out that way. I came west to manage and try to save the Gallo account but the company, Y & R, gave me no idea just how bad the situation really was. Actually, on hindsight, I don't think they had a clue.

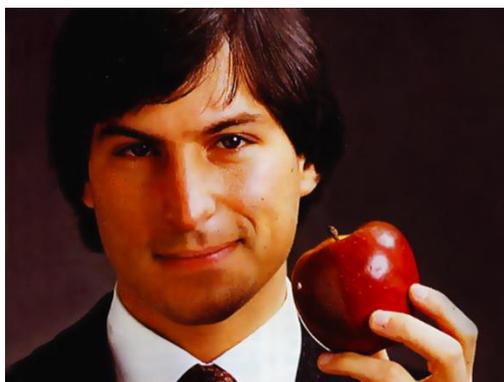
I had a reputation of being tough and in-your-face. But that was partly because I was honest, direct, and straightforward with my clients. Still, [laughs] there was this time when I went across the desk and grabbed a client by his tie. We'd been working on a campaign for about a year, and I was tired of his non-decisions. By the way, I never had trouble with that client again.

By the time I got to LA, people had blown the story out of proportion. I'd heard that I'd actually choked the guy and sent him to the hospital. I discovered people in California have different management styles than I learned in New York. That didn't stop me from saving the Gallo account and keeping them on board another three years.

I took a big chance and it paid off for me. My family didn't want to go west. I had children in school, and they didn't want to be dragged out there. As an incentive, I promised my girls that we'd get a house with a swimming pool. Never happened! But we ended up living eight houses up from the Bel Air Hotel and used their pool... through the back gate! Also, big companies and ad agencies like Y & R are in the funny habit of giving you a one-way ticket to their satellite offices. Once you leave the mothership, there's less chance you're going to get an invitation back.

Bruce: But you eventually left Young and Rubicam?

Fred: Yes. We were in a competition for a large account in LA with Chiat/Day. We eventually ended up winning the business, and I got a look at their presentation - it was beautiful, clever, and creative. I wrote a powerful letter to Jay Chiat telling him how he needed to hire me, and I got the job. I still have the letter, and it's a classic.



What I didn't know, until the day the job was offered to me, was they were going to put me on Apple. I was an account person who had never worked on a client that had a wire or chip—except a potato chip—

anywhere near their product. I'd been used to packaged goods where everyone is always looking over their shoulders to see what was done before. It wasn't too hard to sell advertising to that industry as long as you did what was safe, what was already proven. That's what these guys would approve.

The other thing they didn't tell me was that I would have to move to San Francisco from LA, which turned out to be a very good thing. The technology people were open-minded. Sure, you couldn't sell them everything, but they listened and were willing to try new things. Steve Jobs bought and fought for the 1984 Macintosh ad, which is now famous. He knew when an ad was right and would buy it. Usually, his intuition worked out. You couldn't sell him on everything, but he knew when you had a winner. There were so many in San Francisco and the Silicon Valley that embraced new ideas and creative insights.

Bruce: Were there guys who frustrated you?

Fred: Larry Ellison, for one. He used to bring his own computer. He'd actually wheel a Macintosh in on a little table, and after you'd show him ads your agency had been hard at work on, he'd show you an ad he created. Problem was, it was always the same ad. He'd have one of those T-squares with Oracle on one side and one of the competitors on the other. Then he'd list the things his company did better. Sometimes he even tapped out the ad on the Mac right in front of us, print it out, and push it across the conference table to us.

Cisco didn't think they had to advertise. I came to a meeting ready to present them

with ideas but had to convince them to advertise. John Chambers, who is Chairman-CEO of Cisco today, was a manager at the time. He was in the meeting and asked what good would advertising do for his company. We eventually convinced them to spend. In the beginning, they had set a budget of \$100,000 per year, which was a joke. They ended up spending \$10 million per year.

Bruce: So at Chiat/Day you focused on technology.

Fred: I had accounts outside of technology. But Intel, Apple, Cisco, Oracle, GE Calma, and more were all relatively new companies back then. I first moved up to San Francisco to be closer to work on Apple and found that the technology companies were a great target for new business.

Do you know the name California Cooler?

Bruce: No, I don't.

Fred: California Cooler was the first company like Bartles and James. They brought alcoholic coolers to market. We created ground breaking campaigns that were highly successful. This was a more traditional consumer account, but they listened and approved some great ideas and it paid off. Here, again, I think it was that western entrepreneurial mentality that drove these people to accept the new and different.

Do you know Teddy Ruxpin?

Bruce: Sure, the talking bear.

Fred: Worlds of Wonder, Don Kingsborough and I worked on the campaign for Teddy Ruxpin. We created a

great commercial that Don loved. He loved it so much he took it home to show his wife. It so happened, she had other women over that day and they all wanted to see it. Next thing, Don is calling me on the phone telling me I need to pull the campaign because the women thought it would scare kids – among other complaints.

I ended up having to drive down to Fremont and convince him to run the campaign. Took me about six hours. They were the first start-up company in United States, to that point in time, to generate revenue of \$110 million their first year.



Bruce: Is selling advertising hard?

Fred: I think it's much harder than selling a product. It's rational and emotional. It's got so many intangible parts to it. Frankly, most people don't know what a great ad is. Think about trying to get someone to spend millions on something they don't really

understand, and who also want to hold onto their jobs. You don't have a product in your hand. You have to get your foot in the door and sell them on something that you think will work for them. Advertising is a young person's game. But too many young people don't understand what the business is all about. Beyond experience, it's about trust. Advertising used to be just above used car salesman in credibility. Now it leads lawyers and politicians.

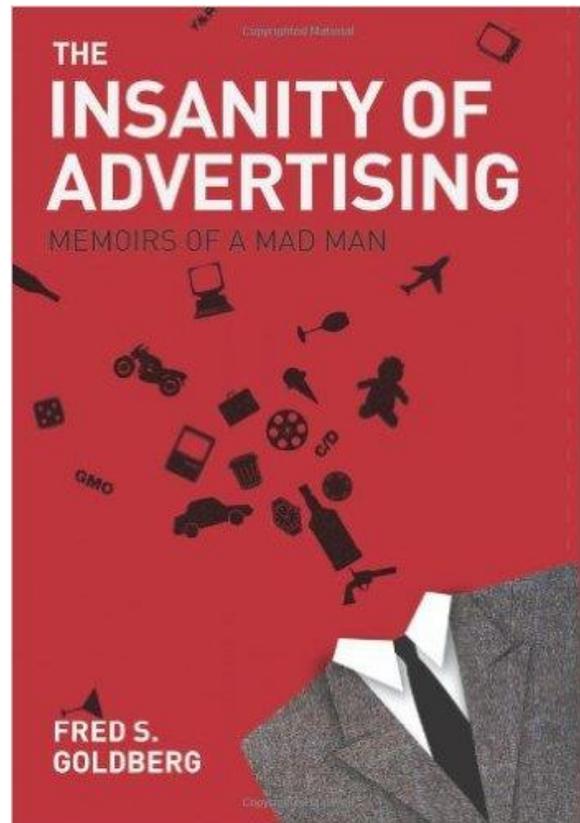
I had success because I was direct and honest. It didn't take me four years in LA to understand that too many people out here don't know what truth is. Maybe because they don't hear it that often. I've been out of the business for sixteen years, and next week I'm having dinner with one of my former clients. I've maintained many such relationships, which I enjoy. You develop a relationship with someone because they can trust you. I believe that goes for friends too.

Bruce: Directness and trust made you successful?

Fred: Yes, but like you say in your first issue of the *Westerner*®, people come west seeking land, gold, and fortune... Coming west also made me successful. The west was a land of opportunity. It was like a gold rush out here for me. Eventually, I left Chiat/Day and founded my own business. Coming to California was the best decision I ever made.

Bruce: Thanks for the opportunity to discuss your books and your interesting career. As a businessman who started his career in Santa Clara, selling for Rand, I'm fascinated about the figures and events of this time. It's been a pleasure to speak with you.

Fred: Thank you, also. I'm interested to see the article. Good luck with the *Westerner*®. It's got a great vibe!



*Send your Letters to the Editor regarding this article at [dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com)*

## TOP WESTERN AUTHOR JOHN D. FIE, JR. TALKS ABOUT HIS FAVORITE SUBJECT: THE WEST



John D. Fie, Jr. is author of the top selling Western hits: *Blood on the Plains* and *Luke Presser: US Marshal*.

Cowboys, Indians, and Westerns have been a fixation with John since he was a boy in Brooklyn, NY. He loved to watch Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers, and The Lone Ranger. On a Saturday morning, he couldn't be pried away from the TV.

Author Fie began writing short stories in idle hours on the road when working as a long-haul trucker. He explains, "When you're in between those two doors, you're in a world of your own out there with the exception of the CB radio." He explains further that "back in the day" when he was driving, truckers weren't connected like today.

When he had a break, he'd sit in the cab and write his stories simply as a form of self-entertainment. Eventually, he wanted to

share his writing with an audience, so he wrote his first book. He found there was a lack of outlets for the Western genre. Then he signed with a publisher, and his book, *Blood on the Plains*, took off.

He feels that the book had such great early success because of the lack of Western authors. In fact, big publishing houses had said, "They don't publish Westerns." Book stores were hiding his books in the back.

John decided the best way to sell his book was to go to the people. He went on Facebook and joined online book clubs to make people aware of his writing. This helped him build a fan base. By the time his second book, *Luke Presser: US Marshal*, was published, he had a large following waiting to purchase his next novel.

Suddenly, he had two books ranking in the top ten in Western genre on Kindle for over six months. People began to e-mail him asking when he was going to publish his next novel. He began to interact with his fan base on Facebook and Twitter. John claims that his Twitter reach is nearly seven million per day.

Nick Wale does John's promotion and has indicated that the new book, *Presser's Law*, has a chance to outdistance the success of the first two. Author Fie is pleased with his audience's good reception as he loves to write and appreciates when people enjoy his novels.

However, he's not going to rest on his laurels. Interacting with people on social media, he finds out what they like and dislike about his characters and stories.

Often times, he goes to bed with his mind reeling as he tries to think through making his writing better. His dedication to his audience and their opinions is rare among successful writers today.

John draws from his time as a truck driver for ideas and characters he uses in his writing today. When he wrote *Blood on the Plains*, he simply walked out his front door, sat down at a table, and started writing. Fueled by experiences and knowledge of the west, the words seemed to flow forward onto the paper.

In the second book in the *Blood on the Plains* series, called *Incident at Benson's Creek*, John found that he needed to expand the writing. "The town needed to be bigger, and I had to add new characters." The result was a highly successful sequel to his first smash hit, which has his audience asking for more.

Before that could happen, he decided to reprise the Presser series with a new entry, *Presser's Law*. Once again, the book premiered to one of the best first sales days in Kindle history. To his surprise and delight, he was now author of four of the best-selling Westerns on Amazon's Kindle.

John is shocked and amazed to be in this position. The author loves writing Westerns and is pleased with the fact that people are enjoying the book. If he can take someone away from their troubles for a little while, then he feels he accomplished his goal in writing. Most of all, he's pleased with the response he receives from readers.

Readers have given his books outstanding reviews. He explains the experience of readers as entering his world with him as the guide. This is what gives him the greatest sense of accomplishment. It also fuels his fire for wanting to do better the next time out. He feels it's his responsibility to make his writing even more interesting for the reader.

The author plans to head west, this spring, to explore more areas and ideas for his book. He's constantly looking for new opportunities for writing. He attaches pictures to the dash of his RV, which he calls his "office," to remind him of subjects and people he wants to incorporate into his stories.

He has his eye on Arizona. He identifies a corner of the state, around St. John's, where there was a range war in a place called Pleasant Valley that lasted almost thirty years. John is hankering to visit the place and find out more about the event. The story is that ranchers were rustling cattle from each other. The author is ready to put some fact behind the rumors.

Another destination he wants to explore is a spot in Texas where the outlaw Sam Bass operated back in the day. From the stories Fie has gathered, he calls the outlaw "The Hard Luck Bandit." He further explains the most Bass ever garnered from a robbery was \$60,000. But the opportunity to see places in person and explore the stories has the writer itching for the spring.

Traveling isn't what it used to be, according to the author. One of the biggest changes is truck stops. In the day, a trucker could get a

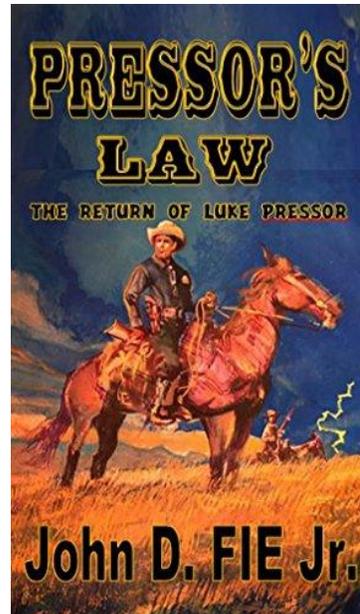
whole satisfying meal at a mom and pop type place. Today, truckers eat fast food while mostly on the run. There's no time to stop and enjoy the road in the frantic world of the twenty-first century. Plus, a company can track a rig wherever it goes.

While traveling the country as a long-hauler, Fie often would stop to enjoy a particularly interesting place or take in the beauty of a roadside vista. These are the memories of the road that he brings so accurately to his writing about the American west. But his enthusiasm for learning more is never ending. Subject matter for new books is constantly at the forefront of his thoughts.

He explains that his constant search for new and different ideas is like being out on the open range. "When you get to one horizon, there's another waiting in the distance." I think we'll see many more winners from this author. His enthusiasm for the subject, his love of his readers, and the constant effort to improve make him one of the premier Western authors today.

Look for the next John D. Fie, Jr. book soon! In the meantime, connect with John on Twitter @johnswesterns.

BB



## TEXAN AUTHOR BECKY MCLENDON ON FLYING, WRITING, MUSIC, LIFE, AND A GOOD CUP OF COFFEE IN THE MORNING



*With the Westerner© staff*

Imagine sailing through the clouds, over the Sante Fe Mountains, then descending to the valley below. Now imagine you're at the controls of a small aircraft, bouncing on the thermals and turning tough into the jet stream.

Retired teacher and accomplished pilot Becky McLendon didn't envision herself at the controls until her CPA husband suggested she learn. Now the two fly throughout the country on the small single engine, fixed wing plane and love it.

"A few years ago, I had a fight with cancer." Becky explains, "Since then, I've felt God opening up a world of new adventures."

The author explained to me, during a one-hour phone interview, that she lives by the words of Galatians 2:20: *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Becky has a knack of turning life experiences into entertaining novels. Her author page can be accessed through this [link](#). Subjects range widely from flying to memoirs of a life growing up on the Rio Grande in Texas. The common thread in all of the author's stories is a plain language approach to entertainment that has new readers clambering for her books.

She was born and raised a stone's throw from Mexico. Her grandparents, with whom she lived, recognized her storytelling talent early on. They purchase a blackboard so that she could draw and tell stories to a delighted family audience. Both her storytelling and artistic fervor developed over the next years.

Her first novel was written at the age of eleven. Then her love for art, language, and writing swept her into teaching. These years fueled the fire for many great anecdotes, which have been adeptly incorporated into her work. Though she writes fiction, her experience and vivid storytelling transfer into thoroughly believable and highly enjoyable books.

You'd wonder when she had time for her four grandchildren or to play her beloved piano. But she describes life in east Texas as being enjoyably slow and thoroughly refreshing. She can play away at Beethoven

into the night without complaint from her distant neighbors.

I asked her about her writing regimen and she told me honestly that she waits for inspiration. Though she has time set aside each day, if nothing arises in the way of inspired thought, she puts it away and goes on to the next thing.

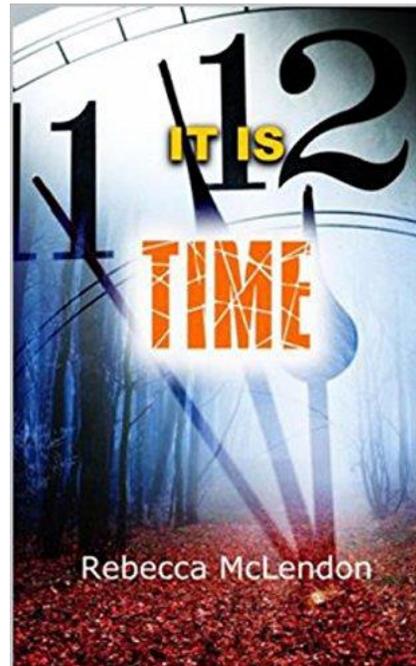
This, she further explains, is because her readers deserve the best in each word written. Though perfection is a lofty goal, dedication to those folks who buy her novels is most important to her. “When people spend their money, I want them to receive the best in return.”

Lately, that inspired work has produced a terrific new adventure novel called [\*It Is Time\*](#). Rebecca explained to me that she identifies more with her character Zoe St. James than any in the past. I believe that’s due to the adventurous spirit imbued in the book’s central figure. St. James curiously has characteristics and attitudes similar to the author.

McLendon enjoyed writing the book so greatly that she’s planning further adventures for Zoe. Though the author likened writing a book to giving birth, I

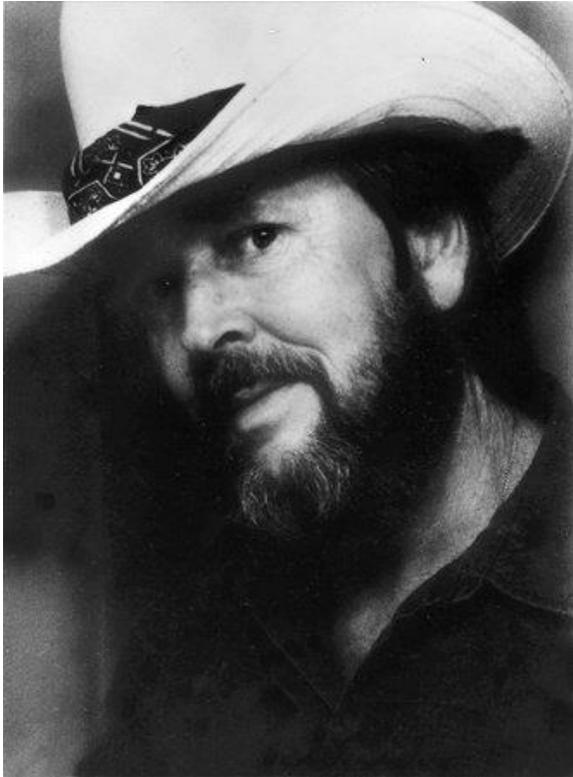
realized that she completely enjoys the process. She warned me not to bother her towards the end. That’s the time when she intensely focuses on bringing the story to a climax. Her family knows not to bother her when she’s writing the ending.

That being said, I enjoyed meeting this multi-talented and tenacious author. Editor, Nick Wale, is encouraging her to write an original Western. The author slipped a secret to me that she has a great children’s story that would be perfect to adapt to a Western book. I look forward to reading that soon!



# WOLF VALLEY

BY ONE OF THE ALL-TIME BESTSELLING WESTERN AUTHORS, RALPH COTTON



*First in a series exclusively for the Westerner*©

## PART ONE

### Chapter 1

Christian Ellis brought the big bay to a halt at the water's edge. He wasn't thirsty, nor was the horse, yet he stepped down from the brush-scarred bay with his canteen in hand and let the animal poke its muzzle into the creek. He sank the open canteen into the cold water as if letting it fill while he

himself sipped moderately from his cupped hand and looked off across a slate gray sky. To the west a boiling darkness had spread the width of the horizon. A streak of lightning licked down from the storm's black belly like a snake giving warning before its strike. But right then, the coming storm was his least concern, he thought, turning a wary eye to the wide dissolute land surrounding him.

Only moments earlier, something across the creek had caused a covey of birds to rise from within the shelter of towering pine. He'd watched the hard batting of wings as the birds raced away on the wind. Since then a white-tailed doe and her fawn had broken cover and crossed the creek less than fifty yards ahead of him, exposing themselves to him in a way no creature of the wilds would do without good reason, storm or no storm. Ellis pushed back his broad-brimmed flop hat, raised his cupped hand and rubbed water around on his face while he guardedly searched the woods across the shallow creek. Someone was there; he had no doubt.

*Indians ...?* He didn't think so. No Indian would have stirred up the wildlife that way. *Then who ...?* He considered as he sipped a mouthful of water, spit it out in a stream and wiped his gloved hand across his lips. Whoever it was they had to know he'd seen them scare up the birds and the deer, he reminded himself. After all that, it would have only been good manners to show themselves to a fellow traveler.

Even as he considered the situation, from within the cover of the tree line, he saw four horsemen ease their animals into sight and nudge them slowly toward him, riding

abreast, spreading out as they crossed the shallow, rippling creek. *Trappers*, he surmised, noting the ragged road clothes and dusty rawhides they wore, each of them with a stack of wolf pelts draped over his horse's rump. They carried their bedrolls and trappings piled high and tied behind their saddles. They carried themselves with a menacing air. Three of them carried rifles across their laps. All of them carried pistol butts in tied-down holsters. *Not good ...*

Standing up slowly, Ellis reached his right hand inside his faded black riding duster, took out a wadded bandana, dried his mustache and eased the bandana back inside his duster. Only this time, when his hand went inside the long frayed duster, he wrapped it around the bone-handled butt of the long-barreled Colt he carried in a shoulder harness under his left arm. From the west, thin raindrops blew in ahead of the storm and dotted his black duster sleeve. The wind strengthened.

A few steps ahead of the other three riders, a man with a dark beard called out without stopping his horse, "Hello the creek bank."

"Hello the *creek*," Ellis called out in reply. Then he stood silent with a trace of a polite smile on his face. Yet, as he'd spoken he'd swept his broad-brimmed flop hat from his head with his left hand in a gesture of courtesy and held it down in front of him, using it to hide the big Colt as he slipped it from beneath his duster. A single larger raindrop blew in, this one landing coolly on his bare cheek. Wind licked at his hair.

The bearded man did not see Ellis's big Colt, yet something in this stranger's

bearing instinctively caused him to stop his horse fifteen feet away in the clear rippling water. The other riders drew to a halt behind him. "We've been watching you the past ten miles or so, mister," said the bearded man, without offering to introduce either himself or the other riders. As he spoke he looked Ellis up and down.

"I thought as much," Ellis said flatly. "Now what is it I can I do for you?" From the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of lightning as it twisted in the distant blackness.

Jerking his head back toward the three men behind him, the bearded man said, "Me and the boys here take wolves for bounty. But we're also what you might call *gatekeepers* for these parts." Without taking his eyes off Ellis, he gestured a hand taking in all of the northern mountain line. "From here on up, there will be no law to protect you. You'll do as you're told if you want to feel welcome up here." He spoke above the growing whirl of wind.

Ellis only stared in silence. From the blackness came the rumble of thunder. More thin raindrops slipped in and appeared silently on his duster sleeve.

"Yeah," said one of the other three men, the only one without a rifle across his lap.

"We're what you might call the *welcoming party* up here." He spread a nasty grin, and his hand rested on his pistol butt.

"Shut up, Singer," the bearded man barked over his shoulder at him. "I'm the one doing the talking here." He leveled a harsh stare at Ellis, and added, "We kill off wolves, keep

away bummers, undesirables, Injuns and whatnot. It costs us a lot of time and expense to do all that.”

“I bet it does,” Ellis commented quietly, keeping both his smile and his poise in place.

The bearded man cocked his head slightly to one side and asked, “Do you understand what I’m getting at, mister?”

“I believe I do,” said Ellis, his eyes going from man to man, sizing them up, already knowing trouble was upon him. “I believe you’re saying I owe you something for traveling through here.”

“Call it a road tax if you will, for providing safe traveling for pilgrims such as yourself.” The man grinned and added, “I can see you *do* understand the ways of the world clear enough.”

“I understand all right,” said Ellis. “Problem is, I allow no money for such expenses.”

The man shrugged as if not realizing what Ellis meant. “We can sympathize with a man being short on cash, times being such as they are.” He eyed Ellis’s horse and said, “We just lost our pack mule two days ago. I always say, a good riding animal is just as good as legal tender when a man finds himself in a spot.”

“Funny, I always say that myself,” said Ellis. His smile remained as he continued to stand in silence, leaving the man unsure of what to say or do next.

Finally the man cleared his throat and said, “So, if you have no cash, we’ll be obliged to take the animal off your hands.”

“There he stands,” said Ellis, giving a nod toward the big bay. “Take him whenever you’re ready.”

But in spite of his invitation, the riders made no move forward. Studying the resolve in Ellis’s cold gray eyes, the bearded man said, as if it had just dawned on him, “You’ve got a gun cocked behind that hat, don’t you?”

“You can count on it,” said Ellis, his smile still showing beneath his broad dark mustache.

Tension set in upon the riders. The first sheet of rain blew in mildly, the hissing sound of it moving up the creek. Duster tails fluttered sidelong, as did the horses’ manes. Not backing off, the bearded man said firmly, his hand tightening on his rifle stock, “Mister, there are no exceptions. Everybody pays.”

“I don’t,” said Ellis. “Be advised of it and move on.”

“You better do some quick counting,” said the bearded man. “There’s four of us. We are not men to argue with.”

“Nor am I,” said Ellis, still smiling. “Now either take that horse like you threatened to or ride away. I don’t want to see or smell any of you on my trail again.”

As the man’s hand tightened on his rifle stock, he asked, “Who are you, mister? I like to know who I kill.”

“My name is Christian Clayton Ellis. Any other questions?”

Lightning twisted and curled, the body of the storm having drawn closer. “CC Ellis!” one of the riders said as if suddenly stricken with awe. His words were followed by a hard clap of thunder that caused the creekbed to tremble for a second. The other riders looked stunned at the realization.

“You’re one of them long riders, ain’t you?” said the man with the beard, his hand already coming up with the rifle, his thumb cocking it on the upswing.

“I am,” Ellis said calmly. With his hat in his left hand he swung open his black duster as his right hand streaked forward with the big Colt.

“Hold it!” the bearded man shouted, trying too late to call off what he and his men had started. But Ellis had already triggered the first shot into action, the first bullet blasting through the bearded man’s chest and sending fragments of his heart spraying through the back of his shirt.

Left to right, Ellis’s Colt rose and fell with each blast, the first two shots finding their targets easily, one lifting a man from his saddle as he let go of his reins. The next shot caused a horse to rear, its rider holding firmly on to the reins as he flew from the saddle, his horse raising high on its hind legs and splashing down onto its side in a high sheet of water. But as Ellis’s third shot leveled and exploded toward the man carrying only a tied-down pistol, Ellis felt a burning pain stab his side, another along the side of his head as the man drew and got off

two shots before slumping in pain himself. Blood spewed from a gaping wound in the man’s right shoulder.

Ellis raised his Colt again with much effort, feeling the world begin to wobble beneath his feet. He watched the young man spur his horse away along the center of the shallow creek. The man whose horse had fallen with him arose from the water and ran limping away behind the rider calling out, “Singer! Wait! Help me!” But the rider wasn’t about to turn back for his wounded comrade. Nor was his wounded comrade about to look behind him. If he had, he would’ve seen his horse rise up, shake himself off, run in a wide circle around the creek and come loping along at a slow trot, following him.

Ellis managed to get off one more shot at the fleeing men, but he hadn’t really aimed it. The shot was meant to keep them running, and it did. Then, as soon as the two were out of sight, Ellis allowed himself to slump to his knees, rain pelting him, his side and his head bleeding steadily. Pain racked him until he rolled into a ball on the wet gravelly creekbank, feeling the world turning dark around him. *Of all times and places in this world for a man to get shot*, he thought to himself, catching a glimpse of the high desolate land with the storm moving in above him, *why did it have to be here and now?* He had business....

\* \* \*

Young Dillard Mosely and his yellow hound, Tic, moved with caution across the creek, loose wolf pelts that had fallen from the horses’ backs bobbed and floated past them. When Dillard eased onto the flat

sandy bank in a crouch, the hound went off a few feet and raised a paw and sniffed curiously toward one of the two bodies that lay bobbing gently in the shallow water. "Mister?" Dillard inquired softly, seeing no sign of life from the man lying in a ball with his pistol clutched to his bloody stomach. He looked all around, first at the two bodies lying in the rippling water, then at the three horses standing a few yards away, their reins hanging loose, Ellis's big bay standing off by itself, away from the other two. "Holy moly!" the boy whispered breathlessly, feeling rain run down the back of his neck. He looked at the hound, who had ventured over with his neck stretched out only inches from the gaping exit wound on one of the dead men's back. "Tic! Get away from there!" he said. The hound backed away grudgingly but continued to probe the air surrounding the dead, rain dripping steadily from his drooping ears.

Dillard heard a low moan come from the man on the bank, and the sound startled him so badly it sent him scurrying backward, causing him to slip on the wet ground and fall solidly on his behind. Noting the boy's action, the hound loped through the water and stopped beside him. "Stay back, Tic!" Dillard whispered, regaining his courage and curiosity. He stood up in a crouch and wiped a hand across the wet seat of his trousers. From beside him he picked up a short stick, ventured forward with it and poked the man carefully in his ribs.

"Get out of here, kid," Ellis managed to say in a strained, raspy voice, thinking that at any moment the two men might return, see his condition and come to finish him off.

Blood filled his eyes and ran freely down his face.

"You—you're alive!" Dillard stammered, his heart pounding furiously in his chest. The stick flew from his hand; he jumped back a foot. Tic growled low and took a defensive stand beside him. "Don't—don't you want help, mister?" he asked.

"No... get *away!*" Ellis said with much effort, unable to explain himself. Pain held him locked in its grasp, yet he wiped a hand across his bloody eyes and forced himself to look off in the direction the two fleeing men had taken.

Seeing him search along the creek, Dillard said, "Don't worry, mister. They're gone."

But the boy's words didn't satisfy Ellis. He struggled against his pain and pushed himself up onto his knees, feeling warm blood oozing between his fingers as he pressed his left hand to his wounded side. Rain ran down him in bloody streaks. "I said... get away from me!" he growled, managing to jiggle the Colt in his right hand, trying to frighten the boy.

*It worked*, he told himself, his gun slumping as he watched both the boy and the dog scurry backward a few feet, turn and run splashing across the shallow creek. *And stay away...* He was unsure if he had actually said the words or only thought them. He felt the world turn dark around him once again, this time as he began trying to drag himself to the cover of a large boulder lying half sunken in the ground.

From the other side of the creek, Dillard Mosely stopped only long enough to look

back and see the man crawling, dragging himself with his gun hand, the gun still in it. As Dillard watched, he saw the man stop, stretched out on the wet ground. The man appeared to go limp, the gun relaxing on the ground in front of him. “Come on, Tic! Hurry!” Dillard said, turning, then running as fast as he could along the wet slippery path toward the house sitting up on the hillside a hundred yards away.

Inside the house Callie Mosely heard her son calling out to her as she ran down off the porch with the rifle in her hands, a blanket thrown over her head. Before she’d reached the path leading down toward the creek, she saw Dillard and the hound run into sight through the falling rain. “Dillard, up here!” she called out, looking past him along the trail for any sign of someone chasing him.

“Mother!” the young boy shouted loudly, running even faster at the sight of her coming toward him, the hound running on ahead of him now, barking loudly. “Hurry, Mother! He killed them all! He killed them all! I saw the whole thing from across the creek!”

“Good heavens, Dillard!” said Callie Mosely, stooping, catching her son into her arms as if he might otherwise race straight past her. “Didn’t I tell you to get home before the storm? What on earth are you talking about?”

“A gunfight, Mother!” Dillard gasped, ignoring her question. “A real, honest-to-God gunfight!” His heart pounded wildly in his chest. “There’s dead men lying everywhere! Hurry! Come see!”

“A gunfight?” Callie had heard the gunshots through the coming storm only moments ago and had wiped flour from her hands on a towel and taken her husband’s rifle down from above the hearth. “Who? Where?” she asked, keeping one hand on her son’s wet shoulder to settle him down as she stood and once again gazed warily along the path behind him. At her feet the dripping hound barked loudly, caught up in the excitement. “Quiet, Tic!” she demanded, slapping a hand at the hound’s rump.

“At the creek, Mother!” Dillard said, gulping hard to get his words and mind settled enough to make sense. “Some of Falon’s wolf hunters shot it out with another man on the creekbank!”

“They killed some poor traveler?” Callie asked.

“No, ma’am!” said Dillard. “He shot all four of them... killed two of them, and the other two hightailed it away!”

Hiking her dress, she started down the path with the rifle raised in both hands. “Now, Dillard, I’m sure you’re mistaken!”

“No, ma’am!” Dillard exclaimed, rushing a bit ahead of his mother, the hound circling him, barking loudly. “He shot them, all four! You’ll see! Hurry! He’s bleeding something awful!”

“You mean”—Callie hesitated in her tracks for a moment—“you mean he is still alive?”

Dillard ran back, grabbed her hand and pulled her forward. “Hurry, Mother, please! I think he is! I heard him groan! He spoke to me!”

*Spoke to him ...?* Callie wanted to stall for a second, yet she hurried on at her son's insistence, saying in a chastising tone of voice, "Dillard James Mosely, did you get close to Frank Falon's men?"

"No, Mother! I didn't!" he said, pulling her along. But as she began to once again hasten her steps, he said, "I *did* get close to the stranger though, just for a minute! Just long enough to make sure he's alive! That was all right, wasn't it?" He hurried her along through the pelting rain, his small damp hand gripping hers.

"Dillard Mosely!" she said without answering him as they splashed along the path. "Whatever am I going to do with you?"

## Chapter 2

"Wait, please!" Kirby Falon had pleaded with Willie Singer, watching him disappear out of the creek, up along the bracken and overgrowth toward the north trail. Lightning glittered, followed by a hard clap of thunder.

"Go to hell, Kirby!" Willie Singer said to himself, not even looking back at the wounded man. Kirby Falon limped along, trying to catch up to him on foot. As far as Willie Singer was concerned he didn't owe Kirby a thing, even if Kirby was Frank Falon's brother. Kirby should never have allowed himself to get felled from his horse that way. Willie Singer kicked his horse into a run along the wet, slippery trail and didn't dare slow it to a halt until he was well over a mile from the spot where he had left the others lying dead or wounded.

When Singer finally did stop, it was not to allow Kirby Falon to catch up to him, but rather to attend to the wound in his upper right shoulder. Yet, as he stepped down in the splashing mud and stripped a wet bandana from around his neck and pressed it to the wound in his shoulder, he heard the sound of hoofbeats coming along the trail behind him and cursed under his breath. In the melee he had lost his pistol, the only firearm he carried. Wiping a hand across his wet face, he looked around wildly and found a heavy five-foot-long length of downfall spruce lying on the ground. He snatched it up with his good hand, hurried into the cover of brush along the trail, and waited with it drawn back one-handed, ready for action, as the hoofbeats grew louder and closer.

*Now...!* Singer shouted to himself, stepping out into the trail. He unleashed a long, hard swing at just the right second and felt the large tree limb connect solidly with the rider's chest. The force of the one-handed blow lifted the rider from his saddle and seemed to hold him suspended in air for a second, just long enough for Singer to see his mistake. "Oh, my God!" he shouted, catching the stunned look on Kirby Falon's face before Kirby spilled onto the wet, hard ground, his head striking the rounded top of a sunken boulder.

*Look for more of Wolf Valley in the next issue of the Westerner©.*

## ILLUSTRATE YOUR OWN BOOK COVER WITH ILLUSTRATION ARTIST JUDY MASTRANGELO



I'd like to talk about DRAWING TREES.

My personal feelings are that no matter what an artist decides to draw, basically the same principles apply. These are what come to my mind:

1. I most often depict in drawing and painting, a subject that I love. And I paint best what I love the most. So I will choose a specific type of tree that speaks to me with its beauty. I urge you to determine a species that you know and love. It could be a type with which you are very familiar, be it a deciduous variety that loses its leaves seasonally, such as a maple or oak, or a tropical palm, etc.

2. Since I am a great lover of the art of painting, I've developed preferences for certain schools of landscape art through the ages. I study their techniques, and try my best to emulate them. They are my teachers.

Among my favorite groups are the Dutch, English, and French schools, and the American Hudson River artists. Three individual artists who stand out for me are Gainsborough, Turner and Jean-Honore Fragonard, who painted figures amongst magnificent trees. And, of course, there is the fascinating ancient tradition of Chinese painting where they paint trees with ink and special bamboo brushes.

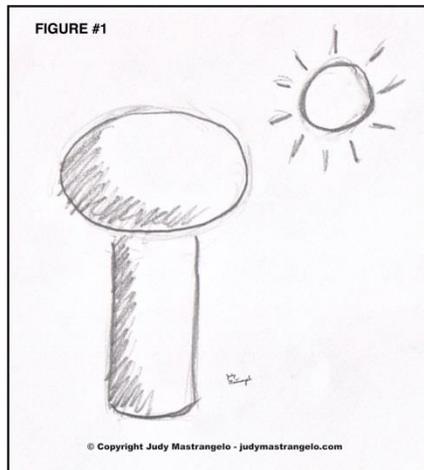
I suggest that you study up on landscape paintings. You will find it very inspirational to your own art. I'm not suggesting that you have to copy their artwork, but studying techniques of artists whom you love is a wonderful way to learn. I find that the study of painting throughout the ages is a terrific fuel to light the fire of Art Appreciation.

3. I feel that a good foundation for painting is a solid ability to draw. One of the first things I do, no matter which subject I want to depict, is to break the subject matter into basic shapes, such as a cylinders, cubes, and spheres. The trick is to make the subject matter that you are drawing look 3-dimensional on your paper, even though it's only a 2-dimensional surface. In this way, a good artist uses the trick of "fooling the eye," which is termed "trompe l'oeil" in artistic circles.

So let's break down a tree into its simplest forms, which consists of its trunk, (a cylinder) and its crown, (a sphere or ellipsoidal shape).

After drawing these shapes lightly on your paper, you can decide where your light source will be coming from. Usually this will be the sun. So if the sun is in the upper

right hand corner, it will be shining its rays on your tree from there. If you will consider this, you can make your tree look more realistic and solid by making the parts of the tree that the sun is not shining on shown in shadow.



**FIGURE #1**

All 3-dimensional objects, whether they are trees or figures, all can look more realistic if you think about this light source when you draw them.

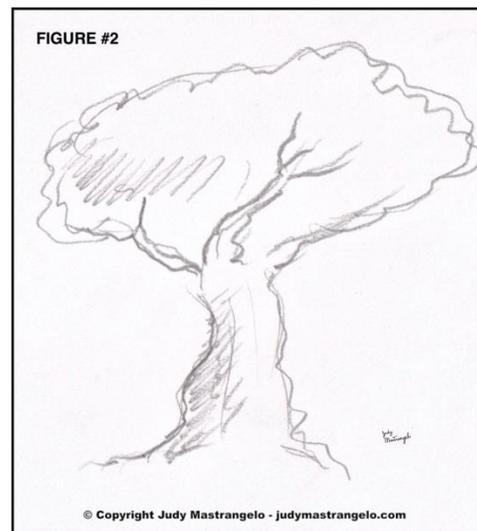
Please remember to plan ahead. When you lightly sketch your tree on the paper, make sure that it's positioned correctly so that you don't run out of room to fit it all in your picture. Therefore, don't start by drawing just one leaf. Think of your tree as an entire drawing, so it will all fit in your picture plane.

4. After breaking your tree into basic shapes, then you can work on developing details. To me, this is the really fun part because I love details. If you are drawing from an actual tree outside, you can go up to it to

study the bark, roots, leaves and branches. If you are working from a photo, you can still study it well. I sometimes use a magnifying glass to study my reference materials.

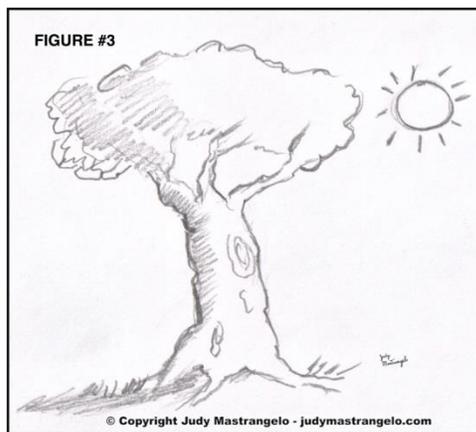
5. You don't have to attempt to draw every leaf on the tree. You can just give a "feeling" of the various clumps of leaves. At first you can draw the parts of the tree in a very "loose" way, almost as a light "scribble," in order to get the entire tree drawn. Then you can firm up your drawing by making it more precise.

If your beginning drawing is done in light lines, it will be easier to erase mistakes than if your initial drawing is done with heavy, dark lines. Once you are happy with your first version of this drawing and have erased any mistakes, then you can go over it with heavier lines, which will be more permanent.



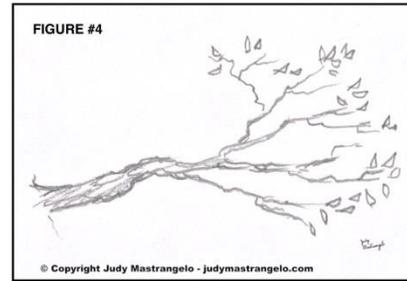
**FIGURE #2**

6. Where the tree is planted on the ground is also a very fascinating thing to develop in your drawing, since you might want to depict some of the roots that are showing above ground. As I said, showing where the sun is hitting the tree will also show where the shadows are. Study how the tree casts a shadow on the ground away from the sun. That will also make your tree very solid looking.



**FIGURE #3**

7. Branches are always a delight to draw. They are often very curvilinear, with beautiful graceful lines, sometimes even snakelike. I enjoy the way they are thicker as they near the trunk and then become thinner as they branch out into very delicate twigs that hold the leaves. Trees are so beautiful! It's great fun to fill a sketch book full of tree drawings. Keep practicing, and you will enjoy it very much.



**FIGURE #4**

If you ask five artists to depict the same tree in a drawing, I guarantee that each of them will draw it in different ways. It's fascinating to see how artists develop their own very individual styles. You will, too, the more you work at it. It's a delightful adventure that I'm sure you will enjoy.

Here is a detail of my painting "AUTUMN CHERRY TREES." You can see how one of my finished paintings of trees looks. In it, the light source of the sun is in the upper left corner. It shines its light on the left side of the trees and casts a shadow on the ground to the right.

I often feel that trees have personalities and can appear somewhat humanoid. The English artist Arthur Rackham often personified trees as strange beings in his artwork. I like doing this also. Have fun with your artwork!

I speak about my painting techniques in my book "PAINTING FAIRIES AND OTHER FANTASIES." I think you will find it interesting.

In it there are also some downloadable tutorials that are very helpful.

<https://judymastrangelo.com/books-2/painting-fairies-other-fantasies/>

My books are going to be published by Dusty Saddle Publishing very soon, under the new imprint title of “IMAGINATION BOOKS.” They will include many exciting titles in several formats, including audio books, e-books, hardcover fantasy, and fun-filled activity books for the entire family. I’m also now developing a wonderful series of creative coloring books for both adults and children. They will have themes such as: fantasy, elves and fairies, angles, fairy tales, landscapes and flowers, and whimsical animals. You can get an idea of my current books in print on my website book page:

<https://judymastrangelo.com/portfolio/books/>

To find out more about my artwork please visit my website at:

[www.judymastrangelo.com](http://www.judymastrangelo.com)

While you’re there, please sign up for my newsletter to discover what’s happening in my magical world:

<http://judymastrangelo.com/newsletter/>

## SUCCESSFUL LAWYER AND AUTHOR BOYD LEMON FOUND A NEW LIFE IN RETIREMENT



Boyd recently published his second novel on Amazon called *Enjoying the Ride*.

Following the release of the book, he decided to take a couple months off, simply to regroup and decide what was next.

January and February were spent in Mexico and California where he put 9700 miles on his car. He and his dog visited family in California.

He's spent the past days trying to organize after being away from home for two months. According to the author, the amount of crap that accumulates is beyond imagination.

Once he's got that under control, a bout of writing is expected. Boyd told me that he's considering a memoir based on his own life experience in his law practice.

Readers might already know that Boyd was an attorney, practicing in California, for close to fifty years. Upon retiring, the author embarked upon a second career in writing. At first, he had no inclination to revisit his successful first career. However, thinking

about the characters and experiences of those times, an entertaining book on those experiences might be in the offing.

The challenge will be to turn his law practice experience into an engaging and entertaining memoir or novel. One way he identifies to make this happen is to focus on the interesting characters met along the way. These characters include clients, opposing counsel, fellow lawyers, and others who contributed to noteworthy anecdotes in his long career.

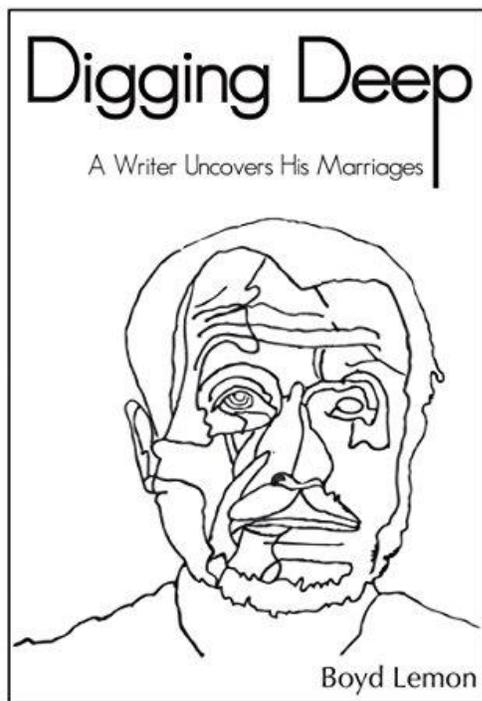
Boyd is also considering writing more in the Western genre. The writing that he's done is reminiscent of his childhood. He explains that he "grew up" in the 1940s and 1950s, which he describes as the "golden era of Westerns." With the renewed interest in Westerns, and the success of Dusty Saddle Publishing, he'd like to focus more in this genre.

He's considered publishing through traditional channels. It was after completion of his first book, which was about his experience in three marriages. He contacted an agent who sent the book out to a number of publishers. After eight months of waiting, the author decided to self-publish. He settled on Kindle Select due to their large distribution and focus on online promotion.

Promotion is a big issue in selling books, in the estimation of the author. He described the difficulties in finding a book promoter, which included the expense and lack of control. However, self-promoting is time consuming and usually yields less than satisfactory results. He decided on promoter

Nick Wale who has had success in raising the level of book sales.

Major publishers are restrictive about who and what they will publish. The author compares success through this channel with winning the lottery. He suggests that few new authors, who aren't already writing best sellers, will get a book contract. With that in mind, he'd like to devote his time to writing and be satisfied with selling to his loyal audience.



His book, "Digging Deep," has reached many people who are in similar situations as those described by the author. In the process of writing the book, Boyd realized his own responsibility in the failures of his marriages. Reading the book has helped many people, specifically men, which the author describes as "rewarding." He wants

to continue to entertain with a message that adds value to readers' lives.

His second book was "Eat, Walk, Write." This book evolved from a journal that the author wrote while living in Paris and Tuscany. While he didn't originally plan to write a story on his adventures living in a foreign country, it seemed natural to translate his experience into a good story. When people read this book, they'll understand better the positives and negatives of the challenges of living abroad.

In 2014, he realized that he'd planned well for retirement. He exclaims, "I finally did something right!" Millions of people who are now retiring aren't planning well for this experience. The author wrote a book that translates as a manual for successful retirement. The book was so well received that he wrote a second edition to this work in 2016.

Boyd tells of the e-mails and letters he receives from readers, describing how his books have helped in their own lives, as "gratifying." He says that retirement can be very depressing because of the life changes that occur. Some people have a feeling of "sitting around waiting to die." The author promotes finding a passion, as he has found in writing, to bring significance to retired life. The book details what a person can do to find their passion and avoid the depression often associated with retirement.

The author describes his choice of profession as being influenced by his dislike in a potential corporate existence. His interest in liberal arts made his choices either teaching or law school. Law school

came as a process of elimination. He found that he loved the research and writing as well as the courtroom experience.

He went to work for a relatively large law firm that required him to work long hours. In addition to that, he didn't enjoy the feeling he was helping rich people get richer. Boyd explains that, in our society, most people can't afford to hire a lawyer. Since retirement, the author describes his life as enjoyable and feels he's "making a contribution."

One of the results of a career as a trial lawyer was a learned ability to handle criticism. Unfair, one-star reviews don't bother him. He states that it's difficult to interpret why someone would offer a negative view, and he doesn't dwell on them. He'd rather focus on the overwhelming amount of great reviews of his books.

Boyd plans on continuing his post-retirement career as an author. His goal for upcoming work is to entertain and help people. It's plain to see that retirement has provided a beneficial new beginning for the author and his readers.

BB

## ROCKING THE WORLD WITH ERIC BAZILIAN

*Record Producer, Performer, and Writer shares some gold from thirty-plus years of rock and roll.*



*With DSP Editor, Bruce Bennett*

I first saw Eric's band, the Hooters, at the Empire Rock Room on the Roosevelt Boulevard in Northeast Philadelphia in 1981. It was an exciting time in Philadelphia, when live rock and roll music was king and nightclubs stayed open late while young people rocked to the Philly sound.

The Hooters broke the mold when it came to rock and roll incorporating new sounds and instruments into catchy tunes in many different styles. When other Philly bands began to fade, the Hooters were on the rise as they took center stage at Live Aid and the Wall concert in Berlin. Their first commercially produced album, *Nervous Night*, went certified Platinum in 1985 selling more than 2 million copies.

Eric went on to a brilliant songwriting career capped by his enigmatic *One of Us*, which was recorded by the artist Joan Osborne and has since been re-recorded and used in a

number of motion pictures. He continues to work in the industry as a songwriter and producer. Finding and producing new artists has become a passion.

The Hooters continue to tour in Europe in the summer and perform several times in the United States each year. Eric is busy with partner Rob Hyman assembling and producing a live album from several concerts at Glenside's the Keswick performed over recent years.

I caught up with the legendary Philadelphia rocker while he was doing his laundry. Here's the great interview that followed:

Bennett: What's new in music for you?

Eric: Where do you want to start?

Bennett: What's new that you like?

Eric: What's new that I like the most right now, without being too self-serving, is a record I produced in fall which just came out by Dave Hause. [He's] an artist I got to know two or three years ago through Helen Leicht at XPN when she was interviewing him and he told that his first concert ever was the Hooters and that made him want to do what he does. It was his Beatles on Ed Sullivan moment.

So she said, "Hey, I know Eric. Do you want me to put you in touch?"

I get an e-mail, and he and I start talking. He's from Philly but moved to the west coast a few years ago. He was playing at World Café live in a couple of nights. He asked me if I would come down and play *And We Danced* with his band and I said,

“Yeah!” To play to a younger audience with a much younger band is pretty gratifying.

So I went down, and when I met him just totally connected. Musically, I love what he does. As a person, he’s great. His much younger brother is in the band, and I made an immediate connection with those guys.

Fast forward a couple years, and we stayed in touch and kept trying to hook up, but he’s in Philly and I’m on tour in Germany. Then he’s on tour in Germany and I’m in Sweden or LA or whatever—it just hasn’t worked out. Then last summer, he started sending me song ideas he’d been working on for his next record just to get my take.

As it turned out, he’d parted ways with his producer, and we both had a window of opportunity at the end of August, beginning of September. He’d been to my studio and saw what I’d done and said, “Yeah! Why not?”

So I brought William Whitman in, who was the engineer on just about anything good I’ve been involved with: Cyndi Lauper, Joan Osborne, *Nervous Night*. He’s a great musician and great engineer and I thought that, considering the style of music which is guitar-driven kind of punk pop, it would be a great chance for Bill and I to work together on something again.

We all assembled here at the house and basically did the record in a couple of weeks. I ended up co-writer on a couple of the songs, but it all kind of came out of Dave’s head – it’s his story. Which is cool. That’s often the hardest part of being the writer – what’s the story I’m telling here?

You’re constantly doubting yourself, questioning, going back.

Dave had that all, and my job was to help bring that out. We did! We had a blast. I got to play guitar all over the record. Bill played bass. He really wanted to bring in David Hidalgo, Jr., the son of Los Lobo’s David Hidalgo, to play drums. So David Hidalgo, Jr. comes in and, in a day and a half, he cuts eleven tracks. Nails it. We even had time to go to the baseball game where Rob and I were doing the anthem.

That came out February 3, and it’s doing really well. He did a run through the east coast and now he’s in Germany tonight. We stayed in touch, and it’s a great record. It’s called *Bury Me in Philly*. In fact, Helen Leicht played a song today when I was driving around.

That was really inspiring because when it’s an artist I connect with, I love producing, I love getting sounds, playing guitar or whatever is needed. They might say, “Let’s try a sax here.” I run down and grab a sax. “How about a hurdy gurdy?” I actually played hurdy gurdy on a track. Little bit of melodica, some piano, it’s like a toybox for me.

And not to have to worry about my identity in it. I’m just trying to help someone else bring their identity into focus.

So that was a blast. That record is very exciting. Even if I hadn’t produced it I’d love it.

What else is out there that’s new that I like?

There's a band called Dawg Yawp. Basically, acoustic guitar and samples – drum samples. They perform live as a duo, with a pad, and they're amazing. The songs are great. They sing everything in harmony –right up my alley.

Who else is out there that I like recently?

King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard. They're from Melbourne, and I happened to be at the World Café with them. I kind of call them a jam band because their songs are about twenty minutes long. It's guitars and bass and drums and wacky songs that flow into each other. It's not really jamming because everything is beautifully arranged.

There's not a lot of pop music that I can listen to.

Bennett: Going back to the early eighties—first time I saw the Hooters was at the Empire Rock Room in the Northeast. There were a lot of bands coming out of Philadelphia, but your band was the only band that made it. You were a Philadelphia band with guys from this area, you're playing in local clubs and all of a sudden you have an album selling millions of copies. What's that all like?

Eric: It doesn't feel like all of a sudden. In our case, it was a slow build. We built our base in Philadelphia 'til we were headlining the Tower. So we already knew what it felt like to play in front of a big audience. Then the album came out, and we were so busy touring and promoting the record that we didn't fully experience it.

I was deeply inside of it that I was part of a machine that had a life of its own. I think we

all kind of felt that way. It wasn't until hindsight that I had the chance to sit down and look at it and say, "Wow! That was something."

Watching the Live Aid video now it's like, "My God, who are those guys? Oh yeah, that's us."

Bennett: That must be super cool.

Eric: It's interesting that you said, "We're the only band that made it." I guess we kind of are – and are the only band that continues to make it in whatever form.

Bennett: There were a lot of promising sounds coming out of Philadelphia at the time. I think I read an interview earlier in which you said, and I wish I could remember who the interview was with, that Philadelphia was a hot bed for sound back then. There was a lot of noise about all these bands that were going to make it which suddenly flattened out, and the Hooters came out and that was it.

Eric: Yeah. Tommy had his spike there for a while. Robert Hazard never really happened. You had the As who kind of gave it up early on. That's funny. I never really thought of it in those terms, but we were just lucky, I guess. Lucky and persistent.

Bennett: Really? Do you think it's luck or do you think it's people looking for a certain sound, reaching the right audience who appreciate what you're doing?

Eric: We came along at a very fortuitous time. Looking back, we would play basically every night of the week. And we would have packed houses. You know, we would start at

10 and play till 1. Looking back, who were these people, where did they come from, and what did they do? These people had to get up the next morning, and we didn't.

There were all these different clubs. South Street was just club, club, club, gig, gig, gig. I go out now and there are clubs with national acts, but it's just not the same. You could go out any night of the week and stay there till two, three in the morning – it was packed.

Bennett: When you were going to school at University of Pennsylvania, you had a band?

Eric: Well, the timing was very good. I met Rob (Hyman) my freshman year; he was a senior. I was in a band with Rob and Rick Chertoff who was the drummer. They graduated, and I had three more years of school. While I was plugging away, Rob and David, the singer from that band, were writing songs.

Rick decided he wasn't a drummer, wanted to be a producer, moved to New York and got a job. Right when I was getting ready to graduate, Rob and David got signed and needed a guitar player. That didn't mean very much. It meant a lot of work, and I didn't get paid for years – nobody did. You get signed to a record deal and basically that will just pay for the record.

I was able to go to New York and make two albums with that band – that was Baby Grand. I didn't have constant contact with Rob through college; we stayed in touch now and then. I graduated and found that little ray of light coming from the sky asking me to come that way.

Bennett: So you felt that grad school wasn't for you, and you were ready to take a risk?

Eric: It's all I ever wanted to do. I'm one of those guys that saw the Beatles, on Ed Sullivan, and all hope was lost for anything else.

I did have this, sort of, moment. Not a dark night of the soul, but a moment of doubt. I guess I was about twenty-eight, twenty-nine – we were working on Cyndi Lauper's record. This was '82 and the band had kind of plateaued. Right around the time we went in to make Cyndi's record, we decided to take a break.

I had this voice in my head telling me, "Think about medical school again. This is the last chance you're going to have to use that side of your brain." So I went off and took the MCATS and did pretty well. Around the day I got results, *Time After Time* went to number one.

Even though I didn't write that, so that didn't give me the safety cushion, it was enough validation of the possibilities. It was my first brush with true international greatness. I played guitars on it and came up with that little melody line that's in it, but that put medical school to rest forever.

I still wonder sometimes. There's a part of me that would have liked to have saved lives for the past thirty years. My friends constantly remind me that my lot in life is to enrich the lives that were here, so, I'll take that.

Bennett: There was a period of time when Hooters songs sort of went away and then, I guess, ten years ago came back like a storm.

There seemed to be a rebirth of that music. Am I overstating that?

Eric: No. I think bigger picture, eighties music is like fifties music was to our parents. That's what eighties music is to our generation. Even like forties music was to our parents. There were oldies stations then. I remember WCAU would play everything up to the Beatles. Now the eighties is the new fifties.

I don't think that we sound like the eighties. Rob and I have been compiling and mixing a live album from shows we recorded at the Keswick. That's been really interesting. Revisiting that stuff and pulling apart the individual tracks.

I was a little bit of a doubting Thomas about doing a live record because, last time we did one, it took a lot of time. You don't just put the tracks up, put some new queue on it, and bounce it to disc. There's a lot of work that goes into it.

We're compiling from four nights, editing between nights on the same song, there are things that need to get fixed. Rob and I talked about it, and this is our legacy. This is our baby we had thirty some years ago, and this is probably the last live record we're going to do. It deserves its shot. I'm actually very excited about it.

Bennett: You have a partnership with Rob. Did you make each other successful?

Eric: Yeah. We and Rick Chertoff made each other successful. Even though I wrote *One of Us* on my own, it was Rick Chertoff who heard the first demo and asked Joan if

she thought she could sing that. Rob actually played drums on it.

Same thing with *Time After Time* and that whole Cyndi record. That was really us with all cylinders firing. We've done some things separately, and I've had some records that didn't involve Rob. Whenever we get back together again... it's home.

We taught each other a lot. I definitely credit him on teaching me how to write songs. I credit Rick with teaching me how to listen to songs and know when it's good enough. I credit Bill Whitman with teaching me how to make shit sound good.

I credit Dave and John and Franny, and Andy King, before him John Kuzma and Rob Miller, with bringing it every night on stage and making it a kickass show.



Funny, you know we tour Europe every summer? We played a fair number of hard rock festivals. Like Sweden Rock – which is huge. All the other bands are like: Black Lab Society, I think Ozzy played one year when we played there, and we get up there with our mandolins and melodicas, recorders and – yes, our heavy electric guitars, and the people go crazy. They love it.

We hold our own. I think we rock harder than most of those guys do. We don't swing our hair around as much. But, fortunately, most of us still have it.

Bennett: Would you agree with the statement that you are one of the best virtuoso guitar players around?

Eric: I would say I was one of the quirkiest guitar players around. John (Lilley), as far as being a virtuoso player or great technical player, can run rings around me. He's got great feel. I don't know if it's the geometry of my hands, but the shit I come up with is not easy to play. I'm not like Joe Bonamassa. But the chord forms and the subtleties...

For example, on *One of Us*, I have yet to find another guitar player that can play that guitar riff right. There's a subtlety to it. People get the notes right. Likewise, I learned every guitar part from every Beatles record, but I will never sound like George or John did. There's a musical DNA that every pair of hands has.

We added Tommy Williams to the band in 2010 because I broke my shoulder and we didn't know whether I'd be able to play. I've known Tommy for twenty years, back when he was Debbie Gibson's guitarist. He played all my licks back then and we stayed in touch, and I knew that with the three weeks we had that he would learn every one of my parts.

But it wasn't the same because no two people will play the same note the same way. We ended up keeping him because it

was great to have another pair of hands and another voice.

When I was sixteen or seventeen, I could shred like Bonamassa then. But that's all I did. Then I had to spend twenty years growing a soul.

Bennett: People who are really good at something almost never tell you. They always say, "I'm really not that good."

Eric: Let me qualify. I am that good. I am that good at what I do. There's nobody better at what I do than me. But that's a pretty big club of people who are the best at what they do. I come up with arpeggiated parts that are as integral as the melody.

Fortunately I'm able to play a lot of other instruments well enough to fool the audience. I go from a regular guitar to a mandolin, which is upside down, to a Swedish mandola, which is a different kind of upside down. Then I got to pick up a saxophone and then I play a melodica. In the studio, I play keys and even play drums on my own stuff when Dave (Uosikkinen) is not around. That's always a challenge.

I have the facility to learn enough on an instrument to sound convincing. Same with languages.

Bennett: Really?

Eric: I can learn a little bit of a language very quickly. I sing in German. Rob and I actually wrote a song in German. We had some help nailing down the grammar.

Bennett: I can't get languages right.

Eric: It's a facility some people have. I speak pretty fluent Swedish. I've been working on that for a long time.

Bennett: For a particular reason?

Eric: I was something I wanted to do and then I married into the faith. My wife and I have been together for twenty-four years. When I met her, I was able to ask her name in Swedish – and where to find the American Embassy.

Bennett: I could never play instruments well.

Eric: I don't think I could write a Western novel. Maybe science fiction. I never read anything but science fiction until I was in college. Most of that science fiction has come true by now.

Bennett: Is there anything that you're doing currently that I missed?

Eric: The only thing current is the new live record. It's going to be a double CD. Why we even bother with a CD, I don't know. I don't even have a CD player. People seem to like to buy merchandise at shows, and in Germany they still sell a lot of physical product. There is something nice about having something in your hand. I'd like to do vinyl, but it would have to be a quadruple record.

I'm always working with new, young artists and some are brilliantly talented. There's a young woman named Alexis Cunningham who I've been working with for three or four years. I met her, heard her voice, believed in her. We've been through several incarnations musically of what she's about.

Now there's a band called the Sugar Pops, which is kind of ironic, it's a rock and roll band.

We are strategizing on how to release it as she has a whole album of rock and roll songs. I'm always writing with people, most of whom you'll probably never hear of and some them you will.

There are the little known facts. You know who Robbie Williams is?

Bennett: No (because I'm a luddite.)

Eric: Robbie Williams is big in the UK. His single came out in '97, I wrote that. It was number one in the UK, all over Europe.

The Hooters song that Rob and I wrote was on the first Ricky Martin album.

Bennett: I knew that.

Eric: I bet you didn't know that I wrote the song on his last album, which came out in 2011, that was a number one Latin hit.

Bennett: I knew that. That's all on the Internet.

Eric: Wow. I'm one of those people [who] never want to Google myself because I'm afraid of what I might find.

About a year ago, I went to LA for about a week. A promoter out there invited me to write with some of the hot writers in the pop world and see how it goes. Song writing in the pop world is a whole different thing. There's a guy with a laptop, they're called top liners. They write the melody or the "top line."

I can't write without an instrument in my hand. My first day, I wrote a song with a guy named Stewart Creighton, total electro-techno pop thing, and we came up with a chorus. He ended up rewriting some verses with a young singer. Couple months later, it's an ad on E! for the Olympics. It was the Olympics or the Oscars, you just never know.

That's the beauty of songwriting. You just never know where it's going to go.

Bennett: It must be gratifying to hear a song on the radio that you wrote.

Eric: I heard a Dave Hause song on the radio when I was driving around today and said, "Wow!" I didn't write it but I produced it. Funny thing, I name checked the pope in that one like in *Zombies*. I think the line is *If I'm old before I die, I hope I see the day the pope gets high*. Me and the pope go way back.

Bennett: That was different popes.

Eric: When that record came out, that was the first time I heard a song on the radio that I'd written but hadn't played on. I wrote it with Robbie and Desmond Child. Desmond ended up re-cutting it in London with his guy. It was completely different. Honestly, I think ours was better. It was the first time I heard a song of mine that didn't have my guitar on it.

My first instinct was, "Where's my guitar?" Then I thought this is kind of empowering to write a song and not do all that other work I've usually done. I wrote this song and "boom" there it is.

Bennett: I just can't imagine.

Eric: I still can't imagine. It's a miracle. It's an act of grace if you want to think of it in those terms.

Bennett: There's a lot of religion in your music and talking about God and other things. Is that on purpose?

Eric: Absolutely not. Who I am varies from day to day. I'm not a praying man. I'm a show me the money kind of guy. If the Almighty revealed himself to me I'd say, "Here we are."

That's the whole point of *One of Us*. Not religious but curious. *All You Zombies* is not a religious song. We used iconic figures to make a point. It's not about Moses or Noah, it's about getting up off your ass and being a human being.

*One of Us* isn't about God, it's about a poor schmuck on the bus trying to get home. It's funny. I get contacted by church people, spiritual practitioners. They love the song. That's good if it means something to you, and I usually let them go on thinking I'm the same way. [Laughs] No, I don't.

Bennett: It's an iconic song.

Eric: The melody and words are my world view. But it's about the guy on the bus.

Bennett: I really appreciate your taking the time with me.

Eric: It was fun.

Bennett: It was a pleasure.

## THE DARK HALLWAYS OF ANDY HOPKINS

Andy is a UK-based International Spiritual Medium. He claims to be able to see spirits and interpret spiritual energy into meaning.



With Bruce Bennett, Editor of the Westerner©

Bruce: We cover many interesting topics in the Westerner, which are well received by our readers. Tell me a little about yourself.

Andy: I was about three years old when I saw my first spirit, my first ghost. I was lying back in my bed, and I felt someone was watching me. This old lady, she was glowing. She really was. The room was pitch black. She smiled at me, and I flipped the light back on and she vanished. In the morning, I told my mother about it and she said, “All right” and ignored me for a couple of days.

Then she showed me a newspaper article that had a picture of the lady on it. I said, “That’s what I saw.” She responded, “You couldn’t have done because she died.”

Turned out she had an open casket funeral in my bedroom.

The house I used to live in was so active, was so haunted, that weird things happened. When I was twelve, I used to sleep down on the sofa to watch the big telly. All the lights flicked off, and two hands came out the screen. Then everything turned back on and I went up to the telly, and there were two graphic handprints on there.

All through my early life I was aware there was more than just this. I was able to find the right people and develop myself spiritually. I’ve been working as a medium now for over ten years. I do ghost hunting, spiritual healing, Tarot, anything and everything spooky is what I like. Clean homes of negative energy—I’ve been in some nasty places.

I’ve got a pretty good hit rate when it comes to cleansing negative energy. Now I’ve developed workshops, which I teach weekly. Go up and down the country with Haunted Britannia, which is going well. Backpacked around Spain, Rome, I was seeking the paranormal. I’m looking to branch out, do a few more workshops abroad. Anywhere that I can do a bit of good.

Every day is completely different. You never know what I’m going to walk into. You never know what I’m going to have to deal with. It’s a passion. If I can shed a bit of light on something people don’t understand, it’s something I like doing.

Bruce: In the United States, there are a lot of charlatans who go out bars on a Thursday night and get a lot of people to come in so

they read their aura or talk about their husband being in the room.

Andy: There are a lot of charlatans, even in the UK. When I was first starting out, I went to a lot of these places to see what was about and get the odd reading from people who don't know me. Some of it is so vague. They say, "I got a man, but it could be a dog." Really just feeding off of people. I can't stand it. I'd rather people be honest, and this is how I teach.

If somebody's paying for you to give them a reading, then you need to make sure they know which spirit is with them. You can't just say, "There's a man with you wearing a suit." Because everybody in the world can take that. If I can't read for somebody, I blatantly say, "Sorry, it's not working." I have to be honest with people, and spending money on things that aren't real is awful.

Bruce: When you read, how does that happen?

Andy: I normally spend a couple of minutes talking to a person. Energy is key. A lot of people feel nervous or feel anxious when they go to a medium. It's like we have a super power or something, so I just try to put people at ease.

I work clairvoyantly, so I see the spirit and hear them and feel them.

Bruce: You see a spirit?

Andy: Sometimes I see them very clearly, physically seeing a form. Sometimes I just pick up on pictures and memories and things like that, so I'll sit down with the person, do the prologue, and tell them what's going to

happen. Then I'll get back to the strongest spirit and explain what they look like, I'll explain how they passed away, and I'll explain characteristics.

I'll make sure the person understands who I'm talking about. Most people who see a medium are after guidance. I think it's important to get that across to people. Every spirit, every reading, is different. It's different when I'm doing a stage show, but I always make sure I'm getting the evidence.

Bruce: Do you see dead people?

Andy: Yes, I do.

Bruce: All the time?

Andy: Sometimes in inconvenient moments [like] if I'm in the bath trying to relax. When I moved back in with my folks and I was trying to sleep in a single bed, a smallish room, I was aware of somebody in the room. I opened my eyes, and there's a little girl standing there. Ten feet away from me. I saw her as clear as day, and she looked like something from *The Shining*.

It was a bit freaky. I put my head under the cover and said, "Can you go away?" I looked up again, and she was standing right next to me. I freaked out a little bit and she vanished. It came back the day after and turned out to be part of a message to a good friend of mine whose step-sister passed.

I try to shut them out if I need to. Most of them are respectful. Most will wait for me to connect to them before they make themselves known to me.

Bruce: Okay. If there is life after death, that will comfort some people and make a lot of other people really nervous. I'm a Christian, but I can buy into the Atheistic idea that when we die there's nothing further. With that in mind, you can see how I'd be skeptical about what you're saying.

Andy: It's a varied crowd. You have the skeptical people, people on the fence, and full believers. It's never my job to prove the spirit exists. I like people to make up their own mind and have their own experience. I also think people have an open mind. If somebody wants to know the answers, then they seek the answers.

Quite a few people change their opinion after a reading.

Bruce: I believe there are a great deal of people throughout the world who are weak-minded and searching for something beyond human knowledge. These people are easily swayed. I think those folks are the true believers here.

Andy: Yeah?

Bruce: Absolutely.

Andy: I don't think everyone who's a true believer is in that needy stage. For example: I have a GP who is one of my students. She's comfortable and happy. She's a true believer. We're getting into an age when people are aware of mindfulness and energy. I disagree that every believer is wanting.

Bruce: We don't know a whole lot about the human brain and how it truly functions. We don't understand what it can do outside of normal boundaries. It's possible it can create

all kinds of weirdness. There really is nothing supernatural in the world. It all can be explained naturally by exploring the power of the human brain.

Andy: It's kind of a catch-22, isn't it? We're not going to know until we've made those discoveries. For someone, such as myself, it's the opinion that this is how it works. How can we know the things we know if it's not spiritual? You know what I mean?

Bruce: No. I believe everything you say. I believe that you see ghosts and dead people and that you're able to tune into the spirit world. I believe all that. I just don't believe in ghosts or the supernatural. I believe you have some kind of innate ability to tap into someone else's brain.

Andy: A lot of people believe that everything holds an energy. It's how mediums and clairvoyants use their psychometry. If you take a hospital, for example, and someone walks down a corridor fifty times a day for fifty years, you imprint on that building. If someone wears a ring for fifty years and passes away, their energy is imprinted on that object.

There's a lot of theories on the paranormal, and there's only one way we're going to find out—when the time comes.

Bruce: That's a bad time to find out.

Andy: That's depends on your beliefs on death. I'm not scared of death. I don't want to do it but, when the time comes, I'm not going to be fearful of it.

Bruce: If I have to come back and talk to people all the time, I don't know if I want to

do it. Just for fun, what do I have my thumb on right now? [Holding an object in one hand.]

Andy: What do have your thumb on right now? I couldn't tell you what you had your thumb on right now.

Bruce: Take a shot.

Andy: What object?

Bruce: Whatever it is.

Andy: Ahhh.

Bruce: This is the kind of stuff people love. If you get it right, you'll have them.

Andy: Okay. I can see the color blue. I can see the color blue, to be honest.

Bruce: It's either blue or red or something, right?

Andy: I wouldn't say blue or red, I'd just say blue. It'd be fun if that was right.

Bruce: I appreciate you taking a shot. You're a good guy, and you didn't mind playing right along. Okay. So when we first moved into the house, there was a lot of activity that might be considered paranormal. It centered in one room. Back then, cameras still had film and my wife took one picture to kill the roll. The picture was of our family room.



In the picture, there may or may not be a hazy white figure that some might call a ghost. This is Christmas time and there are decorations and a large brick fireplace. The walls and carpet of the room are blue as well as the sofa and one lamp shade.

Andy: Fantastic.

Bruce: I know, you did good.

Andy: Point to me.

Bruce: That was fun, wasn't it? I bet you get people challenging you all the time.

Andy: My favorite thing from skeptics is [the question of] if when everything dies they are ghosts, then where are the dinosaurs? Where's the dinosaur ghosts? I think, I'll have a laugh and say, "There's one behind you."

Bruce: Are you religious?

Andy: I believe in the universe and universal energy. I believe everything is recycled. We're born, we die, our energy goes into the astral realm where we can either come back or we can move on. We come back as something else – somebody else.

Bruce: Is there a God or Creator?

Andy: I believe that everything in the universe is connected through energy. I don't believe that there's one particular God. I'm not disputing the fact there could be. I believe that if you do good, then good will come to you.

Bruce: Life on other planets?

Andy: I think it would be naïve to think we're the only ones in the universe. If it's a tiny accident we're here, in a universe our size there's got to be repeat occurrences. I whole-heartedly believe that.

Bruce: What's the weirdest, scariest thing that ever happened to you?

Andy: The scariest thing would have been on a paranormal investigation in a place called Newsham Park Asylum. This place is an abandoned orphanage and mental institution. It's a massive gothic place with no electric. It's pretty much just left—the morgue table, wheelchairs, just left.

At the very top of the building is what they classify as the “naughty boys corridor.” It's a really long corridor with cupboards along the side. When it was in use, they used to put the orphans in the cupboard, lock them in, until they behaved.



I had a group of guests up there, and I was in with this young couple. Torch on, everybody closed the doors, and we heard this scratching sound. We looked to the left, and there was somebody waving at us. We all assumed it was a guest. Light went out, turn torches off, heard the scratching sound again, turned the light back on, and there was nobody there.

That was unnerving. So I said, “Calm down, we'll carry on.” Turned the light back off, heard the sound again, looked in front of me with a torch, and the door had opened in that three seconds.

We all went back out into the main corridor. We held hands, and I said, “Come on. If you're here, do something.”

We all heard a coin being thrown that landed right in front of me. It was a coin from 1912. I had the temperature monitor with me and took the temperature of the item and found it to be fourteen degrees colder than any coin any of us had in our pockets.

Everybody was holding hands. So, for somebody to have faked that would have been incredible. That's one of the weirdest things that happened to me.

I was walking around this place on my own, during the lone vigils, and went back up there just to have a look. I came to a ward and something stopped me. I was looking toward the exit, and two shadows crossed in front of me and vanished. That freaked me out, and I ran back to the base room. Yes, some scary stuff happened there.

Bruce: I can freak myself out at night time or in strange places. I can make myself

believe just about anything. When you see these things, you say you were frightened. Why? Why not get deeper into it and find out what energy is creating it?

Andy: It's human fear. Sometimes you see spirits clairvoyantly. But when it's truly physical, it makes us jump. It's fight or flight. I'd love to say that next time I'll have a chat with them, but you don't know what you'll do until you're in that situation. That night, the energy felt very scary, oppressive, felt it would do me harm, so I left.

Bruce: When I was in college, I went to a presentation by Ed and Lorraine Warren at Main Hall. This was well before any of the movies came out about them. They had a slide show that they presented to the audience, along with a talk about their work. Annabel was really a Raggedy Ann doll.

There were quite a few slides before they reached the slide of the doll. Before they showed it on screen, they suggested anyone who didn't want to look to turn away and they'd alert them to when the slide was off the screen. Then they showed the slide.

About one-third of the audience rose from their chairs and left. Some of them were very disturbed by the picture. You stated that energy attaches itself to objects. Could you explain that theory?

Andy: When I first started doing the whole ghost hunting thing, I went on eBay. Some spirits are attracted to certain things like kid's toys, and I bought a little doll. When it arrived, my oldest kid watched me open it. This doll has no moving parts, no batteries,

nothing. It was cheap, about two quid, and I put it on the back of the sofa, and it laughed.

I said, "How's it doing that?" I took its head off, I looked inside it, nothing. Little things would happen, my daughter would talk to it. So, I got a little lock box and put it in my car. I'm always cautious about things, especially around my family. When I went outside the next day, it was sitting outside the box.

It's got a clasp on the box, nobody was in my car. So I took it to an event in Birmingham and left a camera on it with a trigger on it. The arms move up and down on the video with nobody touching it. To answer your question, I believe a spirit was attracted to the doll.

Bruce: It's interesting. Stuff scares you. Just like I said, I don't believe in this. I can get my mind to play tricks on me. When I saw the movie *Poltergeist*, I was afraid dead bodies were going to come through my floor. It programs you to think a certain way. Make sense?

Andy: The brain is an interesting thing.

Bruce: A lot of people are ready to believe just about anything. How do you know what you're doing is real?

Andy: Because I always say that, if you fear things strongly enough. It's the same thing [regarding] how does a priest know that God's real?

Bruce: They don't. But they have faith.

Andy: I have faith in what I do and the spirits that I connect to, and the guidance I

get from them has truly impacted people's lives. All the proof I need is that I can help somebody that I don't know, that I've never seen, other than that I see these people around them. They relay the message to me, and I'm able to help them.

Bruce: Do the police ever bring you in?

Andy: No. It's not like with Madeleine McCann or with the little kid in Portugal when she went missing, many years ago now. They privately hired psychics. But it would never hold up in court because they can't prove what was real.

Bruce: Can you give me an example of how you've helped somebody?

Andy: I went to do a home visit for a lady. I gave her a reading and told her she might want to check the car, as well. She asked why as she had a rather new Mini. As a precaution, she went the next morning and she needed three new tires.

I can't think of any that stand out more than another. I'm happy to help in any way I can, even if it's just telling someone to relax a little bit or be cautious. I help in any way I can.

Bruce: How would someone who needed your kind of help get a hold of you?

Andy: Most of my work is by word of mouth. People find me on social media also. There's things on Facebook where people inquire, and I'm normally recommended on those.

Bruce: Is there a particular site?

Andy: I've got a Facebook page or through Haunted Britannia.

Bruce: I appreciate you spending the time and thank you.

Andy: Take care then, maybe I'll speak to you again soon.

Bruce: Definitely.

Andy: Cheers mate!

*Andy Hopkins will author a regular column in the Westerner©. If you are looking for a reading, send your picture – along with that of your deceased love one – to [dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com) – reference Andy.*

**AUTHOR G. P.  
HUTCHINSON CHATS  
WITH THE  
WESTERNER© ON  
WESTERNS, SECRETS  
OF WRITING, AND  
UNDERSTANDING THE  
AUDIENCE**



*With the Westerner© Editor, Nick  
Wale*

Nick: How does it feel to be among a select group of Western authors who have managed to hold the coveted #1 spot on the bestseller charts?

G.P.: It's very gratifying. For one thing, with so many excellent Westerns out there—written by some very talented authors—it's pretty tough to get to #1. But the best thing about it is knowing that so many

readers have connected with and enjoyed my stories. I'm tremendously grateful that gave my novels a try.

Nick: How did you start your writing career? What was your first book, and how did you put it together?

G.P.: *Sumotori* was my first book. It began as a serial story with instalments posted to a blog I had started after having spent some time in Japan. It was definitely a seat-of-the-pants endeavour, really just something I was doing for the fun of it and to draw more viewers to the website. I never knew from one day to the next where the story was going. Once I found myself about 20 instalments into the series, I thought, *Wow! It would be easy to turn this into a novel.* Little did I realize how far away I was from being publication-ready.

Nick: Did you find the creative process easy?

G.P.: As long as I keep the first draft in the realm of “creative play,” dreaming up the story and developing characters and plot are a great deal of fun. It's like a movie running in my head, and all I'm doing is transcribing it. Sometimes I come back to a scene I've written and wonder, *Where on earth did that come from?* And I quite enjoy the editing process, too—taking a rough story and tweaking additional “what-ifs” out of it.

Nick: How do you feel about the writing process? Does it get easier as you do it more?

G.P.: Some things get easier. You develop a sense for what works and what doesn't. Your "voice" becomes more distinct and less contrived. Other things can get harder. You become more aware of flaws in your own writing that you didn't notice when you were less practiced.

Nick: How did your writing process change between "Sumotori" and "Strong Convictions"?

G.P.: I wrote the second draft of *Sumotori* under the tutelage of Marg McAlister, and I can't thank her enough for the coaching. But the basic plot had already been developed one scene at a time with no overall outline in place at the outset. When I sat down to write *Strong Convictions*, however, I drafted a full outline and a pretty meaty synopsis of the entire book before going to work on any of the constituent scenes. Since then I've found that, while I feel free to change directions once I'm into writing a novel, I'm much more comfortable starting out with a good outline.

Nick: Where did the inspiration come from to write a Western?

G.P.: I've been an Old West enthusiast since I was a kid, but I'm not sure I ever envisioned myself writing Westerns prior to working on *Strong Convictions*. When I finished *Sumotori*, I intended to write another novel taking place in East Asia. About 40,000 words into the first draft of a story set in Korea, I felt stuck. Things weren't flowing, and I was getting quite frustrated. At that

point, I sat down to play with some random scenes I had written earlier—dystopian, paranormal romance, modern thriller. The scene that was most fun to advance and develop was one set in America's Wild West. Everything just flowed. Within thirty days, I had the first draft of *Strong Convictions*.

Nick: How did you promote your first Western, and what was the response?

G.P.: Any new indie author's biggest obstacle to success is invisibility. It's tough to get noticed when there are hundreds of thousands of new titles for readers to choose from every year. Just after *Strong Convictions* launched, I happened to be reading a Western by an author who acknowledged Nick Wale of Novel Ideas in the front matter of his book. The book was well-situated in Amazon's Top 20 Classic Westerns so I thought, *Maybe Nick could do the same for me and Strong Convictions*. I dropped Nick an email, and the rest is history—a great working relationship and excellent visibility before the reading public.

Nick: Did the response to the second Western differ to the way readers felt about the first?

G.P.: While it took time to develop reader awareness of *Strong Convictions*, *Strong Suspicions* (*Emmett Strong Western #2*) climbed to the top very quickly. Enthusiastic readers of Book 1 readily snatched up the sequel.

Nick: How do you think Western readers choose books?

G.P.: Where unknown authors are concerned, I think the cover, the blurb, and reviews convince readers to give a book a shot. Once people decide an author has given them a satisfying reading experience, name recognition takes over.

Nick: How do you write Westerns to interest the audience? What are the essential ingredients?

G.P.: Whether in Westerns or in any other genre, I believe interesting and likable characters come first. (Or in the case of villains, interesting and highly *unlikable* characters.) From there, yes there are essential ingredients, such as growing, unexpected, yet believable obstacles. Readers are quick to spot anachronisms, so the writer has to have a fairly accurate awareness of period dress, weapons, inventions, and social conventions. Basic familiarity with horses and horsemanship is necessary, too, for the sake of authenticity.

Nick: How do you handle gunplay? Any secrets you can share with our audience?

G.P.: While audiences may be willing to accept a little stretching of the bounds of reality, there are limits. Consequently, it's important that Western writers know and fairly truthfully represent the types of firearms of the period, as well as their limitations and capabilities. Think of how many Westerns you've seen on TV where a character fans

the hammer of his six-shooter, discharging ten, eleven, or twelve rounds without reloading. After a short while, it becomes laughable. At the same time, it *is* fiction. Most readers expect the heroes of Westerns to be crack-shots who rarely miss. Then there's the matter of *how much* gunplay appears in the story. Some folks criticize Westerns as stories where *everything* is resolved at gunpoint. Western Writers of America has dubbed the late Elmer Kelton the greatest Western author of all time. Some claim that Kelton didn't write "shoot-'em-ups." I disagree. I think he simply had a balanced approach to how his heroes and villains went after one another.

Nick: How about horseplay? How do you handle that?

G.P: Horses, of course, were the chief mode of transportation in the Old American West. The spaces were wide and rugged, and it took years for railroads to reach many towns. Being afoot in open country could mean death. Because of that brute fact, it often raised suspicion. Besides, horses are beautiful and noble animals that add color and drama to stories. So a Western without horses is an oddity. Basic knowledge of equine characteristics and behavior are indispensable. Ideally, the Western writer should have spent some time in the saddle for first-hand familiarity with the feel and even the smell of a world where horseback was the ordinary mode of transportation and often the place from which a man worked.

Nick: What are the integral themes in your two Westerns—are these regular Western themes?

G.P.: Great question. Westerns have a time-honored tradition of serving as morality plays, often commenting more on the era in which they are *written*, rather than the period that they portray. For this reason, I think Westerns have a huge contribution to make in our own post-modern era with its shifting and uncertain moral values. A good Western, in my opinion, should challenge and provoke contemplation of morality and ethics, yet it should not do so in a high-handed way that destroys all sense of story. Given the era, natural themes include issues of racial and ethnic tension, nationalism, the relationship between humans and the land and resources we use, male-female relationships, the meaning of progress or success, the value of family, etc.

Nick: Do you think the Western readership is growing—or shrinking?

G.P.: Those who grew up on Westerns are, of course, aging and even passing away. Consequently, current writers of Westerns bear the burden of introducing younger readers to the genre in a positive and compelling way. In many cases, it's difficult for younger generations to relate to Westerns because of well-intentioned, but biased education that heaps shame upon those who opened the American frontier to non-native settlement and development. I find it unacceptable to judge people of the second half of the nineteenth century

by twenty-first century standards. It simply had not entered the mind of most people of those times and conditions to think of and evaluate things as we do today. How many things have come to light in the past hundred years that were completely unknown at that time? There was no mass media with 24/7 news cycles. Yet enduring values and timeless truths were very much in play during that troubled yet wonderful era. What a service to people of our era to return to a time with fewer layers of complexity in order to isolate and ponder issues that come at us today with firehose intensity.

Nick: How do you feel about the reviews your books have gained? Do you feel readers appreciate your books?

G.P.: I'm very grateful to the many readers who have taken the time to share their reading experience with others after having completed the Emmett Strong Westerns. The vast majority have been very kind in their comments and very expressive of their enjoyment of the stories.

Nick: Let's talk plot—what is *Strong Convictions* about?

G.P.: *Strong Convictions* is the tale of Emmett Strong, a reluctant Texas Ranger who is bound by love and honor to pursue his brother's assassin all the way to the silver-mining country of Nevada. The murderer has taken refuge with his own brother's employer, the wealthy and powerful Lucian McIntosh. Among other things, McIntosh trades in human flesh, furnishing kidnapped

girls to brothels across a broad area. When Emmett Strong, still mourning the untimely death of his young wife, finds himself surprisingly falling for Li Xu, the beautiful daughter of Chinese immigrants, his sense of family duty is tested. Li and some of her friends are kidnapped. Freeing Li may necessitate letting Emmett's brother's murderer elude justice altogether. But Emmett has already crossed a line, and more than one powerful and resourceful enemy will go to great lengths to see him dead.

Nick: How did you come up with that storyline and what did you most want readers to take away from the book?

G.P.: The heart of the story revolves around an American Western hero falling in love with an Asian girl. However that may strike you—romantic, improbable, fascinating, or contrived—it arose, I must confess, in a very pragmatic way. I was having fun dabbling in writing a Western, yet my previous novel had been a modern story set in East Asia. I was looking for a bridge to link two works of differing genres and eras, and this seemed a plausible way to do it. I truly believe the story works and is very appealing, and now I'm quite content to continue on for a while in the Western genre. With two volumes in the series completed and another in the works, I've come to *love* Emmett and Li as a couple, and I think most readers do, too.

Nick: Did you use beta readers during the writing process?

G.P.: For *Strong Suspicions*, yes.

Nick: How about *Strong Suspicions*? How did you further the story in your second book?

G.P.: In *Strong Suspicions*, Emmett and Li's relationship develops. On several fronts, they face opposition together. Emmett's already lost one wife. He doesn't want to lose another. So he is plagued by reservations when it seems he must bring Li along with him into new and deadly dangers.

Nick: Did you gain readers, or lose readers, with the second book—and what was the key to the books success?

G.P.: By the grace of God, the timing on the release of *Strong Suspicions* immediately after a special promotion of *Strong Convictions* was absolutely perfect. Both books had a very healthy run for several months with tens of thousands of readers going straight from one book into the next.

Nick: How about the upcoming third book? Can you give readers a few hints about the new book?

G.P.: Emmett Strong Western #3—*Strong Ambitions*—still features the same key protagonists, yet it has a fresh, new feel to it in that this instalment is a murder mystery set in Old West Texas. The closer Emmett and Li get to exposing the murderer, the more determined a hidden enemy is to eliminate the two of them. There are lots of colourful characters, some based loosely on actual personalities of the real Old West. The story takes place in a

Texas town that actually existed but that was washed away in a flood in 1882.

Nick: Let's talk covers, G.P. How did you come up with the covers of your two Westerns?

G.P.: I did not want stock artwork on the covers of my Westerns—artwork that might show up on the covers of half a dozen other books. I wanted something beautiful, yet evocative of the dangers of the era and of my own stories. When I came across the hand-carved gun leather that Karla Van Horne of Purdy Gear Custom Leather produces—many pieces of which are accurate replicas of historical holsters and cartridge belts of the Wild West—I knew I had found the central pieces around which my cover artist could build attractive book covers. Karla Van Horne has been very gracious to allow me to feature her gun rigs on the Emmett Strong Westerns.

Nick: How about editing? Do you think editing is essential?

G.P.: Editing *is* writing. Releasing an unedited book—and I mean multiple rounds of editing—is at best like selling an untrimmed, unstained, unburnished pair of cowboy boots. They *might* last through a few days in the woods, but they lack all the lustre, beauty, artisanship, and durability that could have made them your very favourites for decades to come.

Nick: Where can we find your books?

G.P.: The easiest place to find them is on Amazon.com. The paperbacks are available through CreateSpace and Barnes & Noble, and the audio version can be purchased through Audible.com.

Nick: Where can we learn more about you?

G.P: Visit my website, <http://gphutchinson.com>, or look for @GP\_Hutchinson on Twitter or Facebook.



## PRESERVING AMERICANA WITH D. G. WYATT



*This interview is special. It's with one of the leading Western authors of today. A historian of sorts, who collects artifacts from the past—who writes of the past—who makes his home in the very fabric of the world's collected history. This interview is with D.G. Wyatt—one of the most well-read Western writers of today.*

*With the Westerner* © Editor, Nick Wale

**Nick: Welcome to this interview, D.G. It's a pleasure to spend this time with you.**

D.G.: Thank you for having me here.

**Nick: Let me jump in straight away and ask you this—where do those golden ideas come from?**

D.G.: There's no easy way to answer that question. I've always enjoyed stories. My grandmother used to share her stories of the west with me. She used to share a lot of her experiences with me. As a child I loved stories—and as an adult I knew I wanted to write books. I didn't know what kind of books—that came later. I just knew I wanted to tell stories for a living. The ideas come from within me. I know why they come to me, but I have no idea where they come from.

**Nick: Is writing spiritual to you at all?**

D.G.: Yes. It really is. It's a chance for me to express myself by writing stories that come to me. It's a peaceful activity that allows me to truly delve into myself.

**Nick: Interesting. Where did your love of Westerns come from?**

D.G.: My grandmother. I used to listen to her stories, read the Western novels she had, and together we used to watch shows like *Bonanza*, *Have Gun Will Travel* and the movies of her favorite Western actors like Henry Fonda and Robert Mitchum.

**Nick: I see—so how are your books put together?**

D.G.: I start with an idea, then I write them. Then I meet with my cover designer and get a feel for the cover I want. It's a step-by-step process, and I enjoy every part of it.

**Nick: Really? You enjoy everything about it?**

D.G.: Yes. It's all creativity. The energy of the activity feeds me.

**Nick: How do you feel about other Western authors in the industry?**

D.G.: I think they've got the right idea. Everyone is working overtime. What more can I say?

**Nick: What do you think about editing?**

D.G.: That is the great chore. I've had great editors, poor editors and average editors. I'm happy with the one I have now. It's been a challenge.

**Nick: What are your hobbies outside of writing?**

D.G.: I really like collecting toys—I also like collecting games. I enjoy sports, wrestling, movies. I like a little bit of everything.

**Nick: If you could write a book on any subject what would it be?**

D.G.: I'd love to write about the Alamo. That would be a dream come true.

**Nick: What is your latest release called?**

D.G.: *Guns on the Pecos*—it's a really good book, and it might be the best book I've ever written. The story came to me in a dream. It really wrote itself.

**Nick: What's this about an expo you are putting together?**

D.G.: Oh! Thank you for mentioning that! Yes. I have a convention I've been putting together for just under a year now. We have a group of celebrities, and we will be holding a function on October 21, 2017 in Cooperstown, NY. More information can be

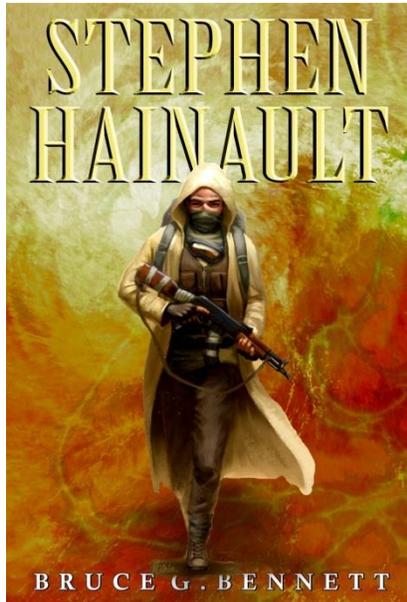
found at <https://www.authorcon-moviefest.com>. It will be a blast!

**Nick: Thank you for your time, D.G. It's been great meeting you.**

D.G.: Not a problem at all. Thank you for asking me.

## STEPHEN HAINAULT BY BRUCE G. BENNETT

Reviewed by Brace Larson



The first statement I must make is that this is one of the best novels I've read. No matter what your politics, this book will provoke you. Hainault is a character not unlike creations by such great writers as Robert Ludlum, Lee Child, or Michael Connelly. But the difference is he rises above international intrigue to make a statement about world relations that haunts the reader long after they've finished the book.

I've been a fan of Author Bennett's *Gabriel Torrent* Western series and decided to give this action/suspense adventure a try. I was expecting a fast moving, wild ride imitating

some of the greats. What I found was a totally unique treatment of a subject that somewhat eludes the best of writers today.

Sure, there was plenty of violence and tense drama. But, in the end, the book was about people. It's about how people feel about each other in their soul, outside of government, religious, and other affectations. I was about one-quarter the way through the read when I found myself knotted inside. The book had grabbed me by my core and forced me into the soul of the story.

In the end, I simply sat back and thought about my feelings, my country, and the future of people who share this planet. The central theme of the book, for me, was that this is the only life a person will have, and it should be lived outside the control of country, religion, or ethnic origin. The fact that this so strongly hit me caught me by surprise.

I feel that the author cares deeply about many injustices in the world from reading the *Gabriel Torrent* series. But this book took me on a ride that was quite unexpected. I'm surprised it's not on the New York Times Bestseller list, it's that good.

I give it five stars.

BL

# SETH NATION

## DEAD MAN'S RIVER

### Chapter 2

# The Blackbird

(September)

A loud throat-cleansing cough followed by the deep hawking sound of phlegm rising was enough to startle the crow from its perch upon the barren limb of a pine tree. Gabriel Rojas gave the crow a momentary glance as it flew off then spat the bloody wad onto the pebble laden hillside. His appaloosa followed suit, snorting snot loudly and messily into the dry evening air. Wiping his lips with a dirty rag and paying no mind to the residue of blood left upon it, he looked down into the wide valley below with an old pair of Confederate-issued field glasses he had stolen from a Mexican.

The late summer sun laying low in the horizon cast an ominous shadow that enveloped the twin desert villages and permeated across the river and up the mountainside on the opposite end of the valley. Paso del Norte, El Paso.

Rojas stowed the field glasses in his saddle bag. He could feel the itch of another lung-clearing cough rising. Digging deeper in the bag, he pulled out a bundle of cloth and a bottle. Uncorking the bottle with his teeth, he took a long swig of tequila, which seemed to calm the itch. He paused and took another swig for good measure, savoring the bitter agave. From the cloth bundle, he retrieved a few hard biscuits and the last of the venison strips, a gift from a woman he visited from time to time. He fingered the Smith & Wesson pistol at his waist while he chewed. He liked the feel of the pistol, especially when he had thoughts of killing on his mind.

The crow sensing little danger returned, landing on the man's shoulder as he ate. Rojas offered the bird a small piece of biscuit, which the crow plucked from his gloved fingers. A silent appreciation was reached between them, neither seeming to have any intention of disturbing the other. Rojas smiled as the bird picked at a few crumbs that he placed on his shoulder. They were a lot alike... he and the crow. Both were loners, both were scavengers, and both seemed to have the perception of death. He liked the crow.

The itch returned, and this time Rojas gave in to it, wrenching internally as the cough took over. When he was done, he spat his bloody wad onto the hillside a second time, and again wiped his lips with the dirty rag. The crow remained steady. He peeled off another nibble of biscuit for the bird. The crow ate quickly, stabbing at the food with

its long, crooked beak when it finished, and with a small flutter of its black wings, it returned to its perch in the pine tree.

Dismounting, Rojas led the appaloosa farther back up the hillside and behind a large outcrop of rock and boulders to where he had set up a small camp. He let the horse free graze in a plush patch of wild green grass, that somehow had survived the torment of the sun. Hefting the weathered saddle and his wares back to camp, he unfurled a bedroll on a smooth piece of flat rock. He had just enough room to spread his thin legs and stretch out. He thought of building a fire, but he had not had proper time to collect wood upon arriving. He would have to make do. The late night desert chill was still a month or more away. Tomorrow he would scratch out some kindling and perhaps a few pine boughs. His rations were empty save the last few biscuits, and he would need to find some game. The thought of a greasy grouse or a jackrabbit roasting on a spit caused him to salivate; it had been weeks since he'd had a proper meal.

Lying back on his bedroll with his legs stretched, he was just about to close his eyes when he heard a whimper. *Damn it.* He rose and walked to the other side of the camp. The man was lying cradled in the fetal position, his knees pressed against his chest with his back against another smaller outcrop of rock. His hands were cuffed, and his ankles bore leg irons; a rope was used to bind the two together. A torn piece of the

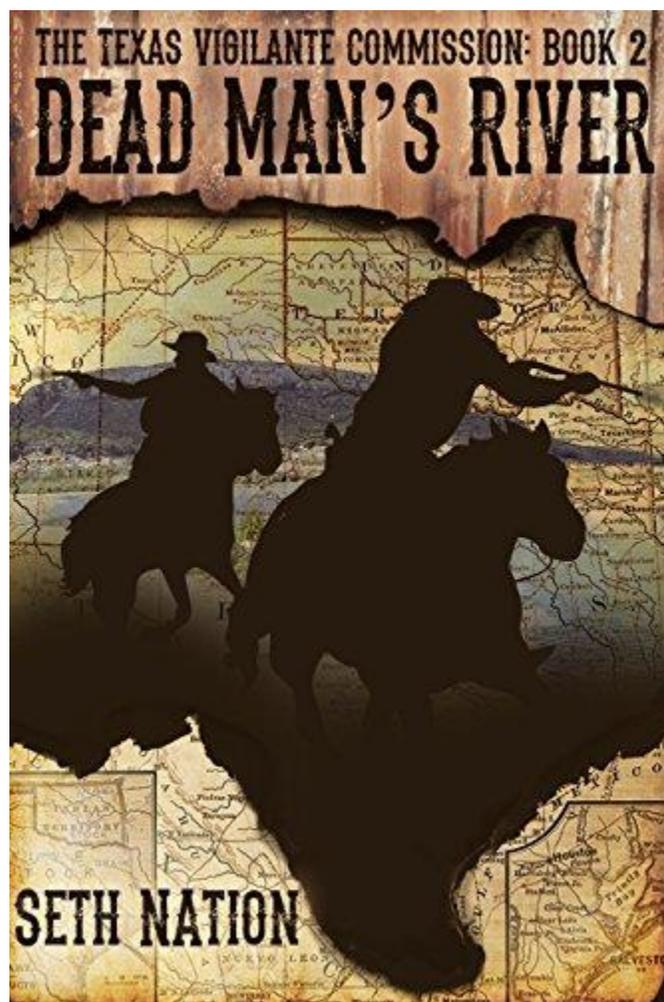
man's shirt was shoved in his mouth. Mud caked his face except for the small trails of tears beneath his eyes.

Rojas removed the cloth from his mouth. Instantly the man began gulping air. He begged for water, *only a sip*, but Rojas laughed. He had no intention of providing the man a thing other than his death... slowly. Sobbing, the man tried to scream, but his throat was as dry as the rock he sat on. With all his might, he tried, but he couldn't produce anything more than a whimper. Rojas laughed again... laughing at the man's condition. He laughed hard enough to bring on the itch again. A deep cough welled inside of him, and when it was released, Rojas spat the bloody wad onto the man's cheek, watching it flow down to his chin. He planted his boot square into the man's ribs, causing the man to exhale a torrid groan before Rojas once again stuffed his mouth with the bundle of cloth. Another kick of his boot to the man's head knocked him out cold. *Good night.*

Rojas rolled himself a smoke, and with an Indian blanket draped across his shoulders, looked up at the night. He loved the darkness. He felt at home in the black of night. *Tomorrow afternoon, the others would be here*, he thought to himself. He had one more man to recruit. Together they would head out into the West Texas desert, to San Carlos and find him. Then it would be time. Señor Montez had cautioned him about the timing, the timing was critical. Normally Rojas could care less of another man's opinion

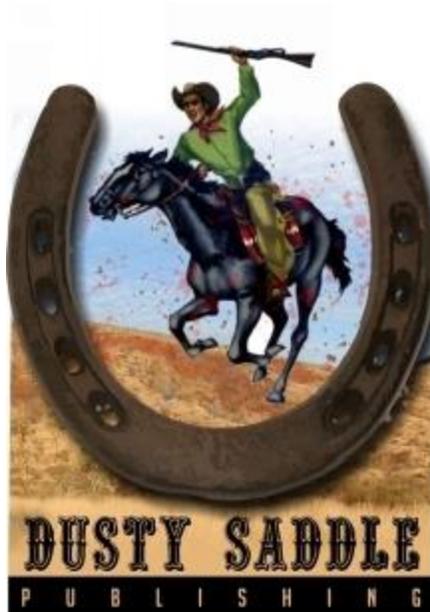
or advice, but Montez paid good so he would listen, for now. Rojas needed one more, then they would head back to the river and to Mexico.

The Blackbird as he liked to be called, crushed out his smoke. God help it if anyone stood in his way; he had a job to do. Like the crow, he would be a harbinger of death.





For more information on how you might publish your Western, or if you know of a Western author whom our audience might like, contact Nick Wale at:  
dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com



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