

WESTERNER

ISSUE NO.3 //
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THE PREMIER WESTERN CULTURE MAGAZINE

FEATURED INSIDE...



BERNARD CORNWELL,
AUTHOR OF 'THE
LAST KINGDOM,'
FILLS US IN ON HIS
SUMMER PLANS...

THE BEAUTY OF YOGA
WITH 80'S STARLET
TRACI WOLFE!

KING OF THE WESTERN:
MEET MIKE HUNDLEY!

1960'S POP IDOL TELLS ABOUT PHILLY IN THE HOT DAYS OF ROCK 'N' ROLL!

THE EXCLUSIVE TRUTH BEHIND THE ROCK 'N' ROLL LIFESTYLE OF BOBBY RYDELL. ALL HIS MAGIC MOMENTS WILL BE REVEALED BY A BRAND NEW BOOK PREVIEWED INSIDE.

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EFFORT TO KEEP THE WESTERNER© FREE FOR OUR READERS.



JOHN DEERE

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Rediscovering the West with Author Mike Hundley

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



I'm excited to present the first summer edition of the Westerner© because it's full of my favorites. First, we'd like to thank our sponsor Deere and Company for helping us keep the Westerner© free for our readers. Next, I'd like to thank super author Bernard Cornwell for taking the time to talk about his writing. Have a look at *The Last Kingdom* available on Netflix this month or grab one of his terrific novels on Kindle, audio, or paperback today.

We've received an overwhelming amount of emails regarding articles in our past two issues. First up is the most popular topic of the past issue, Deana Martin's interview about her work and legendary father. I've picked a few of the more representative offerings but could have made up a whole issue of your comments.

Thanks! We appreciate hearing from you. If you would like to contact us, please send your email to dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

Thank you so much for the interview with Deana Martin. I love that music and just loved her father. I remember watching every one of his shows on TV. One thing you were right about was nobody today has that kind of class. Finding out about the real person was amazing. I'd like to see many, many more articles like this one.

My husband and I saw Deana Martin at the Cape May Convention Hall a number of years ago. I loved the concert and would love to see her again. She is very classy and her singing voice is terrific. I hope you'll print my email so that she knows.

Mrs. K. J. Dover, DE

Dear Mrs. J.,

Thank you for taking the time to email us. "Classy" doesn't even begin to describe Deana Martin. She's a talented performer and quality individual. I'm pleased that came through in the interview as we hoped to do her justice.

For more information on Deana, please go to her website at:
<http://www.deanamartin.com/>

Dear Sir.

I want to write you about your interview with Deana Martin. Dean Martin was my favorite singer and star ever. He was so handsome and had such a great voice. It made you feel warm inside just to hear him. I remember when he had his daughter and him on the show and they sang a duet. That was a long time ago!

I want to go to a Deana Martin concert. Do you have any information on that or is there a place I can find out where she will be? It would be great to hear more about Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra and those others. Do you plan on more interviews like that? Thanks for the magazine because it's really great and free too.

Joan M. Charlottesville, VA

Dear Joan,

Thank you for reading. Readers like you help us to continue to provide great articles and celebrity interviews, such as the one with Deana Martin. For more information and a schedule of her upcoming events, please go to:
<http://www.deanamartin.com/>

Dear Editor,

I really enjoyed the interview with Cindy Morgan. *Caddyshack* was my favorite movie and it was great to see those cool pictures of Bill Murray and Chevy Chase. I remember when the first *Tron* came out, and my girlfriend and I went to see it. She thought it was really weird but I knew that this was the way movies were going to be made in the future.

Do you know if Cindy is going to be at Comic Con in Orlando this year? Do you know how to send her a letter?

Thanks!

Bobby K. Mooreville, MS

Bobby,

Thank you for taking the time to write. Cindy's website is:
<http://www.cindymorgan.com/> *The information you're seeking should be there. BB*



SWINGING WITH MEMORIES OF GREAT MUSIC WITH BOBBY RYDELL

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a phenomenon of teen idols sprung from the neat streets of South Philly. One of the standouts of that time was the singer and musician Bobby Rydell. His popularity and fame spread in the late 1950s with great hits like *Volare*, *Wild One* and *Sway*. His wide appeal landed him in a leading role in the 1963 hit movie, *Bye, Bye, Birdie*.

Throughout his career, Bobby has continued to perform and delight crowds from Philadelphia to London. He'll be remembered as the trendy South Philly singer who rose to stardom but never forgot his roots. The *Westerner*© editor, Nick Wale, caught up with Bobby on his great career and continuing popularity.

Nick: So what's up with you these days?

Bobby Rydell: Same old stuff I've been doing since about 1959. Working, new book out, doing different book signings. You know, very, very busy.

Nick: Well, you've always been very busy. How's the book doing?

Bobby Rydell: The book is doing very well.

Nick: You know I saw it advertised a few months ago and I thought if I was ever involved in a magazine, that's the guy I'd interview.

Bobby Rydell: Well, thank you, Nick.

Nick: And then when I got hired on the *Westerner*, which is this magazine, I said to the guy, "You've got to get Bobby Rydell on." I said not only is the guy up there with Elvis and those guys, he's got this book to promote.

Bobby Rydell: Thank you, Nick. That's very nice.

Nick: Well, it's true. You were right up there with those guys, weren't you?

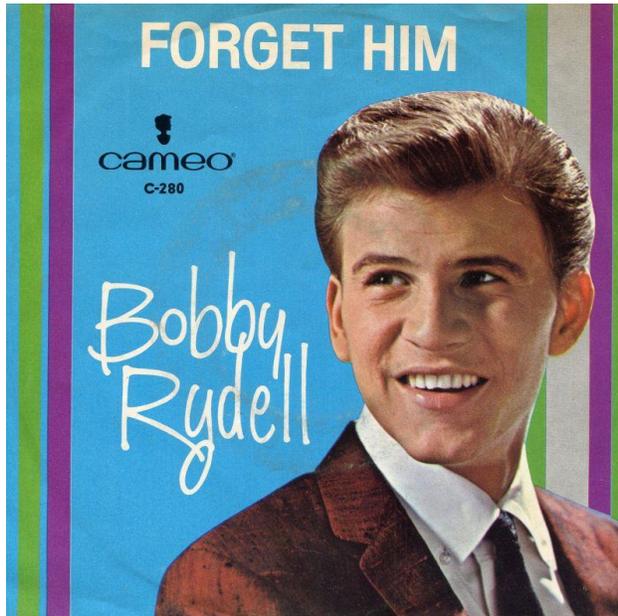
Bobby Rydell: I don't think I was ever as big as Elvis. Yes, I was up there. Myself and Frankie Avalon and Anka, the Everly Brothers, Fabian. I don't think I was ever in the class of Presley. I doubt that very much.

Nick: I think you had a lot of fans. You had some great records. How did you get picked up by Chancellor anyway?

Bobby Rydell: I wasn't on Chancellor.

Nick: You weren't on Chancellor?

Bobby Rydell: No. Avalon and Fabian. I was on Cameo.



Nick: So how come you didn't fancy Chancellor? (Laughs)

Bobby Rydell: I honestly don't know, to tell you the truth. Years ago, Nick, I was on a T.V. show here in Philadelphia called the Paul Whiteman T.V. Teen Club. I was only ten years old. I went on the show doing impersonations, and I became a regular on the show. The piano player for Paul Whiteman was a gentleman by the name of Bernie Low, who later became my boss at Cameo Records. He started the label in Philadelphia and... I was ten years old on the Paul Whiteman Show and then seventeen years old I signed with Cameo and Bernie Low became my boss. But I was never involved with Chancellor.

Nick: (Laugh) I knew that. You know, I've got to tell you, I had your albums when I was growing up, and my favorite one of your albums was the one with *Twisting the Night Away*. Which one was that one? Sings the Great Hits? Sings the Top Hits?

Bobby Rydell: Top Hits of '60 or '63? Probably '60, I guess.

Nick: I think it was like, '63. It was around the same time as *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Bobby Rydell: Okay, so that would be 1963, yes.

Nick: I used to get your records and Frankie Avalon's records and Fabian's records. And my parents were older. They were much older parents. So, that's all I heard was your records and Frankie Avalon's. And I took to your records a lot. For years, I didn't know Sam Cooke did *Twisting the Night Away*. I thought it was your record.

Bobby Rydell: Oh no, no. He had the ditto on it. I just recorded, like you say, back in 1963. Bobby Rydell records all of the hits. And I would do tunes that various artists recorded and became hits for them. So, I rerecorded them and did them in my style.

Nick: I loved your style. I loved that record. When somebody told me that it was a record for this guy, Sam Cooke, I didn't believe them.

Bobby Rydell: You know what, Nick? I loved Sam Cooke. I really enjoyed Sam Cooke. I never had the opportunity to

work with him. I saw him at the Copacabana in New York City and he was marvelous. Unfortunately, I never worked with him. But I really enjoyed Sam. He was a very classy artist.

Nick: Did you ever run into Elvis?

Bobby Rydell: Never met him, unfortunately.



Nick: I bet you knew Bobby Darin quite well.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, I knew Bobby Darin. Bobby and I were close friends. As a matter of fact, I have a picture downstairs in my music room, actually it's a caricature of Bobby Darin signed to me. He wrote on the caricature, "Bobby, I wish for you what I wish for myself. Your Friend, Bobby Darin."

Nick: So, tell me, did you always want to be a singer?

Bobby Rydell: I guess it goes back to when my dad went overseas. I was born in 1942 and, when I was three years old,

my mom used to write to my dad when he was overseas. My mom would say, "The baby's always singing." My father wrote back - I still have the letter today - my father said to my mom, "Well, who knows, Jenny, maybe one day we'll have a star in the family." If I had any talent within me whatsoever, my dad was the first one to see it. He used to take me around to clubs, night clubs, here in Philadelphia when I was like seven - eight years old.

Nick: So, you were around all this great music when you were growing up, really. And it just took off.

Bobby Rydell: If you've read the book, I was five years old when my dad came back from overseas. My father loved big bands. He loved Dorsey, Goodman, Tex Beneke, Artie Shaw, Basie, Ellington, so on and so forth.

I was five years old and, one Saturday afternoon, there was a theater called The Earl, and he took me to see Benny Goodman. Now, I'm five years old. I really didn't know who Benny Goodman was. I wasn't exposed to big band music. So, he takes me, and there's one guy who really impressed me in the Benny Goodman Band and that was a guy by the name of Gene Krupa. He was playing drums for Benny Goodman back then. I said to my father, "I don't know who that guy is, Dad, but I want to be him. I want to be that guy playing drums." I started playing drums when I was just about five or six years old.

Nick: You grew up quite close to the other guys that you stood tall with, didn't you? You lived near Fabian and Frankie Avalon?



Bobby Rydell: I was born and raised in south Philadelphia, on Eleventh Street - the twenty-four hundred block - and Fabian was half a block away from me - the twenty-five hundred block on Eleventh Street. Frankie Avalon was two blocks away from myself and Fabian on Ninth Street. So, yeah, we all knew one another. I've known Frankie since I was ten years old. Frankie's a little bit older than me, a couple years older than me, but Frankie Avalon and I go back quite a few years.

Nick: Reminds me of Peter Nero, the pianist.

Bobby Rydell: Really?

Nick: He said to me, "Where you from?" I said, "I'm from England. Where are you

from?" He says, "I live in Philly." And I said, "Oh, I hear good things about Philly." He says to me, "Like what?" So, that's my question. What's good about Philly?

Bobby Rydell: Cheese steaks.

Nick: He eventually admitted that the food was the best thing.

Bobby Rydell: Being Italian, you know my real name is Ridarelli. We have a lot of great Italian restaurants here in Philadelphia. Peter Nero, when he used to do the Philly Pops quite a few years ago, and I did a show with a hundred pieces at the Academy of Music here in Philadelphia on Broad and Locust Street. We became very, very, dear friends. Philly, not only of the younger guys, but our particular area - south Philadelphia and Philadelphia in general - produced so much talent. Eddie Fisher, Al Martino, Mario Lanza, Buddy Greco. And then you can go on to the jazz level. We had Johnny Coltrane, we had Dizzy Gillespie, Billy Jo Jones, Percy and Albert Heath. I mean, we had a lot of great jazz musicians come out of Philadelphia.

Nick: You really did. You had some of the best talent. It was really a hot bed, wasn't it?

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. It really was. They say how come so many people came out of Philly, talent-wise, singers and musicians and actors and so on so forth? I said, "Well there was a water trough on Ninth and Dickenson and, if you drank out of it, you became a singer. If you put

your feet in it you became a dancer. If you drank out of it and put your feet in it, you became a song and dance man.

Nick: It's true. You know, every time I used to buy records, almost every single one of you came out of Philadelphia. Buddy Greco was from Philadelphia. Bobby Rydell is from Philadelphia. And I always wanted to visit the place. I never did. But there's still time.



Bobby Rydell: Oh, you must, Nick. It's a wonderful city. It's a very historic city. We have the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall. The Declaration of Independence was signed here in Philadelphia. We have marvelous history. It's a great town. People are wonderful here, in Philadelphia, unless you go to a sports event. Then, we become like idiots. If you can see my hat, I don't know if you know what this represents—that's the Philadelphia Eagles, which is our national league football team. I've been a season ticket holder since 1963. And we're still waiting for a Super Bowl. So, I don't know.

Nick: You know, sports is a thing. My wife is American, I'm British, and she got me hooked on all your sports. I tell you,

Super Bowl, we have to watch it every year. And Baseball. All of it. And I didn't know the rules to football. I might be the only guy who didn't know the rules to football. So, you have to learn pretty quick.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. You know, you guys there in the U.K., you follow soccer much more than American football. In London, I think it's at Wimbledon Stadium?

Nick: That's right.

Bobby Rydell: Where some of the NFL teams, the National Football League, come over and play one game a year. And from what I understand there's some people in the Parliament, or whatever it may be, who are trying to get a team in the U.K., trying to have something like we have here in the states, the National Football League, and have a team of their own. Whether it be in London, or all of the other places in the U.K., that would be interesting. I think the people in the U.K. are starting to appreciate American football.

Nick: I agree with you there. I'm starting to prefer it more to soccer, myself. It's a slower paced game, but it's got more strategy in it. It's a strategy game and it's really interesting. I really do enjoy it. But I guess we can't do a whole interview about football. Maybe we can. That would be interesting.

Bobby Rydell: Any time you want, Nick.

Nick: Bobby Rydell picks the winners. (Laughs)

Bobby Rydell: I haven't been too good so far.

Nick: Hey, I've got a question to ask you that I've always wondered. Back when I was buying the records—and they're all here in my office. If you can see my office, it's filled with records. You made an album on Capital. How come you went with Capital after so much success with Cameo?

Bobby Rydell: Well, at that particular time, Cameo was just about going out of business. They couldn't produce any more hits. I wasn't doing anything with the label and much of the artists on the label. So, Bernie Low sold most of the masters to a man named Allen Klein in New York City. When that happened, Bernie Low said, "Bob, whatever you want to do is fine with me and fine with the company." So, I signed with Capital. And I was with Capital for about three years. I never really had any success with Capital, although I did some really fine recordings. We did some big band things, things I've always loved. My first record on Capital was a remake of Paul Anka's *Diana*. We did it like an ebftide and it was really a very well-produced record. It started going up on the charts, and then I believe Wayne Newton was signed to the label as well. It could have been *Danke Shoen* or whatever it could have been, and they dropped all promotion they had on *Diana* and the record just got lost. I never really had a hit on Capital, but I recorded some good things with them.

Nick: That one album was a stormer. *Somebody Loves You*, I think that was it.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah.

Nick: It was a real change in sound because you were going through this kind of jazzy stuff. *Too Soon to Tell a Lie*, *Nobody Tells*, *Somebody Loves You*. That was on there as well. It's a hell of an album to pick up. It took me a long time to find it. I wished they'd pressed a few more copies.



Bobby Rydell: A matter of fact, one of the tunes that I did on Capital was on the Milton Berle Show. That show only lasted for six months, and it was on ABC television, here in the states. Milton Berle was a very fine songwriter. He wrote a song called *You've Gotta Enjoy Joy*, and that was the theme song of the television show. When I was with Capital, he asked me to record it. The recording was done and the arranger was Bob Florence. He was one of the top arrangers in the world, for crying out loud, and I had all of the top L. A. musicians. I had Louie Belson on drums, and it's a big band swing thing, and it's

really a good tune. Never, never, happened for me. But if the fans are interested to hear Bobby Rydell with a big band, you gotta listen to *You Gotta Enjoy Joy*.

Nick: I think that whole period was interesting. Even the flip sides on the singles are interesting. And it's interesting because you were still really young when you moved to Capital. It must have been like the teen idol thing is kind of dying out. You must have been looking for something new.



Bobby Rydell: To tell the truth, from when I was about five years old and my dad took me to see Benny Goodman and I saw Gene Krupa, I never really listened to any rock and roll. I really didn't enjoy rock and roll. I loved listening to Sinatra, to people like Goodman, Tex Beneke, Artie Shaw, Count Basie, Duke Ellington. That's the

music that will always remain in my heart and my soul and the type of music I like to sing. To this day, when I'm on stage, not only do I do my hits, I do songs from the American songbook. Songs that go back to the late thirties, forties, so on and so forth. I really enjoy singing that type of music, and it gives me a chance to show the fans in the audience not only can he sing *Wild One*, and *Volare*, and *Forget Him*, and *Swinging School*, and *Sway*, but I can also do songs from the American Songbook. I really enjoy that, and basically, that's what I do today. I really enjoy doing that type of music.

Nick: It must have been the musical upbringing in Philadelphia, because all of you guys could really sing that stuff well. They tried it on Motown. It didn't sound as good. All of you guys from Philadelphia, Frankie Avalon did a lot of swing stuff, and you've done it. I think even Fabian had a bash at it. You all had a go at doing swing albums, and they're all good listening.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. Frankie was originally a trumpet player. And I was originally a drummer. So, we were both not only recording artists but we were musicians as well.

Continued on page 39

BERNARD CORNWELL – HISTORY, IN HIS OWN WORDS



By Westerner© Editor Bruce Bennett

We Americans like to make lists. One of our particular favorites is ranking the best people in certain fields of endeavor. We make lists of the best baseball players, best actors, best movies, best books, best places to take vacation, and more.

I've been especially privileged, in this edition of the Westerner©, to interview the writer I'd list as my favorite living author. Bernard Cornwell was born in England and moved to America following a brief, but successful, career

in television. He gave me the reason for that move, his fascinating story, so I'll defer to the interview for more information on that subject.

Television viewers are experiencing a great revival of programming based on historical fiction. His series, *The Last Kingdom*, is now available on Netflix after its smashing success on BBC America. Rotten Tomatoes offers the following review: *The Last Kingdom* fuses beautiful cinematography and magnificent action sequences to create highly gratifying historical drama.

The Flame Bearer, most recent in the Saxon series, is also the latest Bernard Cornwell novel to hit the New York Times bestseller list. He's just finished a new novel featuring a hero that may surprise his readers. I could continue filling the pages of this magazine with a glowing introduction or let the author's words speak for themselves.

Without further ado...

Bennett: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. What are your new projects?

Bernard: I just finished a book that I don't think will interest you in the least. [Laughs] Next year, I'll go back to the Saxon stories.

Bennett: Last I recall, Uhtred of Bebbanburg was inside of Bebbanburg. Where does he go from there?

Bernard: The story behind Uhtred is the creation of England. We're still a few years away from that. If you were in England in the year 900AD, (God help us), most people wouldn't know what you mean by the word *England*. Thirty-four years later it existed – and it existed through warfare. The rest of his story is how that war developed and how it ended.

Bennett: How does the story track with actual history?

Bernard: It fits rather loosely. The reason for that is we don't know too much about the history. We have sources like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. We have The Life of King Alfred, written during his lifetime, but beyond that and a few other chronicles, the evidence is pretty vague.

You might say the big story, which is how England was created, is real enough. On top of that is a hell of a lot of fiction. Most historical novels are going to tell two stories: There's the big story – like can the south survive the Civil War. Then there's the little story – can Scarlett save Tara. What you do is flip them.

The little story, which is all fiction, comes to the foreground, and the big story goes to the background. The background of the story is real enough, but because we know so little about the facts I'm free to make it up (thank God.)

Bennett: So you're not a big fan of non-fiction?

Bernard: Oh, yeah, I am! I read it all the time. I've written one non-fiction book and that's probably enough.

Bennett: Are you surprised at the success of the Saxon stories?

Bernard: I'm pleased. Remember, I'm incredibly ancient and have written an awful lot of books. So the Saxon books came after a lot of other successful books. In that sense, the reader, or a lot of readers (thank God,) trusted me enough to try them. They seem to like them.

Bennett: That's an understatement. I started with Sharpe series.

Bernard: Most people did. Sharpe brought me the first success.

Bennett: When you began writing, let's just take the first Sharpe books, what surrounded that beginning?

Bernard: Desperation.

Bennett: Okay...?

Bernard: What had happened was: I had a proper job as head of television in Northern Ireland for the BBC back in the 1970s. And I met a blonde in Edinburgh. The blonde was American. She couldn't live in Britain, for family reasons, and I didn't really have any ties at all. So I said, "Don't worry, darling. I'll move to America." (ha ha)

Well, the American government refused me a green card. I had to find something to do which didn't need their permission. So I said, "Don't worry, darling. I'll write a book." Here we are, still married thirty-seven years later – and fifty odd books.

It was completely crazy! But I mean, that said, what was I going to write? I'd always liked the Hornblower stories by C.S. Forester. By 1980, Forester had finished writing those, but I think Jack Aubrey had just started. There were many guys writing about the British Navy fighting France and I thought it strange that no one was doing the same thing for the British Army.

What I thought, I perceived, was a gap on the shelf. What I thought I'd do was write Hornblower on land. That was it. As it turns out, it was a gap on the shelf. But if I hadn't met Judy, I don't think I'd ever have done it.

Bennett: Really?

Bernard: Yeah, I had a good job. What was I, thirty-six? I was running a region for the BBC. The next job would have been... I don't what it would be. Eventually, I would be program controller for some TV station. I'd have eaten too many hospitality lunches, I'd have become overweight and be dead.

Bennett: [Laughs] You know, I can't imagine that you didn't start out thinking *I'm going to be a writer*.

Bernard: Okay, I cut the story a bit short. Yes, I did want to be a writer. I always thought it would be a great thing to be. I had this idea it was better than working. It takes an enormous leap of faith to abandon a well-paying job and risk everything on writing something the public will accept.

So while I always wanted to be a novelist, I'd done nothing about it. It was the spur of meeting a blonde.

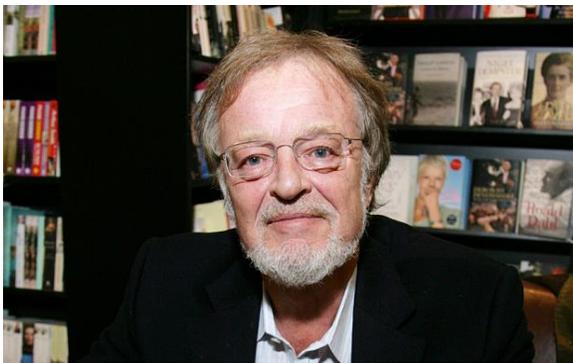
Bennett: When you originally sat down to start writing, did you use a framework?

Bernard: If you were going to build a better mousetrap, the first thing you'd do is buy every mousetrap on the market and pick them apart to see what's good and bad about them. Right?

Bennett: Right.

Bernard: What I did was take three books – and I can't remember what they were now – and I literally broke them down paragraph by paragraph. I made these enormous charts about where action happened, where dialogue happened, where flashback happened. I said, *I hate flashback so I'll use less of that.*

I used those heavily on the first couple of books. Then I realized I was doing okay, and ignoring it, so I threw them away. Did that help?



Bennett: Yes. So when you go to write your next book, do you already have an idea of what it will be about?

Bernard: No, not a clue. I often don't know how it's going to end. I'll probably start with some vague idea, but I never know how a book is going to go. I think the joy of reading a book is to find out what happens. Strangely, for me, the joy of writing – and the pain of writing one – is to find out what happens.

It's easy with a Sharpe book, because you know you're going to do the battle of Salamanca. Whatever you do is going to head towards Salamanca. What I do, when I'm writing, is incredibly inefficient. (I don't recommend it.)

I just start writing. I'll throw Uhtred into some situation, in chapter one, and see how the hell he gets out of it. I get a quarter of the way through the book and I look back and think *Oh, there's a better route for him to get here. He's like climbing a mountain.* So I go back to the beginning and rewrite, following the better route.

That gives you the impetus to get half-way up when you turn around and think *Oh, Christ, that's a better route.* Then you go back and start again. Terribly inefficient.

I mean, some writers like famously Joanna Rowling, plot everything out before they start. They know what's going to be in every chapter, and I envy them. There's not a right way and a wrong way. Everybody does it differently.

I think it was the great E. L. Doctorow who said, "Writing a book is like driving a car down a winding unfamiliar country lane at night with very feeble headlights. You can only see as far as those headlights will show you."

I think that's true for me. It's certainly not true for Joanna. Hell, she's more successful than I am, so maybe she's right and I'm wrong.

Bennett: When you say "She's more successful," what do you mean?

Bernard: She's sold a lot more *Harry Potter*.

All writers do it differently. I know writers, like Joanna, who plot everything out. A lot do it the way I do it, and I'm sure there's a third way.

It was Somerset Maugham who said, "There are three rules about writing a novel: Unfortunately, nobody knows what they are."

Bennett: That's interesting, because my little publishing company publishes a lot of independent writers.

Bernard: What's the publisher called?

Bennett: Dusty Saddle Publishing. We publish Westerns. A lot of authors tell me *all I do is start at the beginning and let the story find itself*.

Bernard: The story's never been told before, so how the hell can you know the ending when you've never heard it? That's my feeling.

Bennett: I've listened to so many people, who are writing teachers, and I've even

ventured into a writing class at a local community college. I wanted to see if that would help me write better. They told me, "You've got to outline. You've got to have a framework or your book isn't going to be successful."

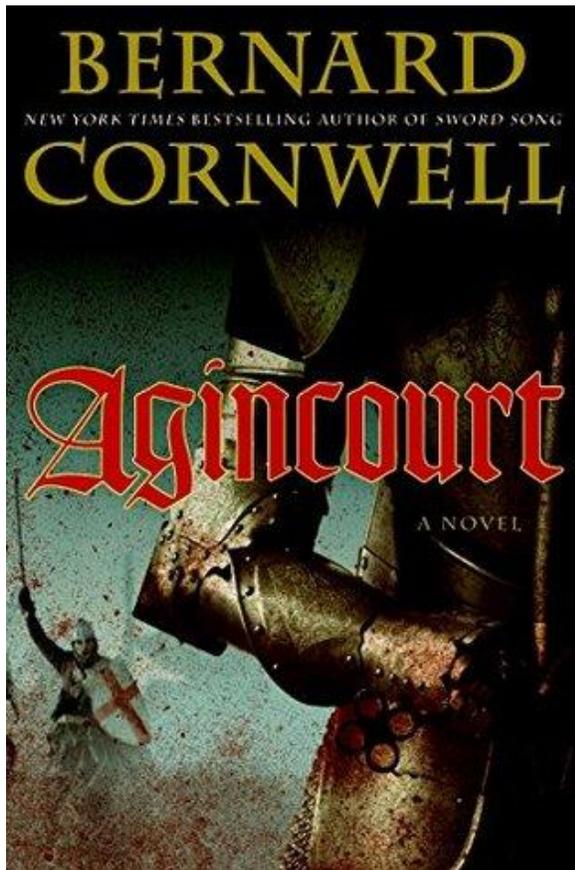
Bernard: [Laughs] Okay, I have a real suspicion of writing groups. I understand that when somebody wants to become a writer, which is the only time in your career when writer's block is permissible, we all lack confidence in the beginning.

We think *I can't do this; it's too many words; I don't have the confidence or don't have the skill*. So, a lot of people go and look for reassurance in writers' groups. The problem with them it seems to me, and I've never belonged to one but I've gone and talked to them, is that they're almost always dominated by a couple of egotistic guys who seem to think they know everything there is to know about writing.

A new writer, submitting their work to this group, tends to get heavily criticized. That criticism is only going to increase their insecurity. When you write, you write for yourself. You write what you want to read. Then you hope you've got what an agent, or publisher, will want to read. They, in turn, hope that a lot of people will want to read.

You don't write to please the writers' group. Write for yourself.

Bennett: There are many small things in your books that make them fascinating. Going back to *Agincourt*, for instance, just such things as how much pressure it takes to string a bow or pull a bow back. How does that come about?



Bernard: You have to research each book. Ordinarily, I have a ghastly amount of background knowledge. But that isn't going to help with stringing a bow – you raised that question. I found a guy who could actually shoot a war bow with a draw weight of over a

hundred pounds. I spent a couple of days with him.

It was actually eye-opening, because what we did was set up a man-sized target out of straw. What I really wanted to know was how many arrows he could fire in one minute. Remember, this damn bow is a huge bow and had a draw weight (I think) of a hundred and fifteen pounds. He got off sixteen arrows in a minute.

Of the sixteen arrows, twelve went right through the target, which was about a hundred and fifty paces away. The rest of them hit the guy next to the target – it was actually frightening. It's no wonder that Ben Franklin said the Revolution would have been over in six months if the rebels had long bows. It's a far better weapon than a musket.

But it took forever to learn how to use it. You have to be unnaturally strong. We found the graves of English archers, in France, and they all have this hugely increased bone density on the upper part of their body because it took them years to become strong enough. Continual pulling on the bow strings made the bones get bigger so the muscles could attach.

This guy I was working with, I mean, his back was just a mass of muscle. It was quite extraordinary.

to *Enemy of God* – I haven't read *Excalibur* yet.

Bernard: You'll love it!

Bennett: I agree with you one-hundred percent.

Bernard: I shouldn't have said that. Please keep going.

Bennett: In the *Warlord Chronicles*, it seems there are a lot of pacts made with enemies, like the Saxons. In the Saxon series, it seems as though there is constant warring.

Bernard: It was almost constant. There were peace treaties. But that doesn't apply to Uhtred. He's a loose cannon.

Bennett: Glad he is.

Bernard: Me too!

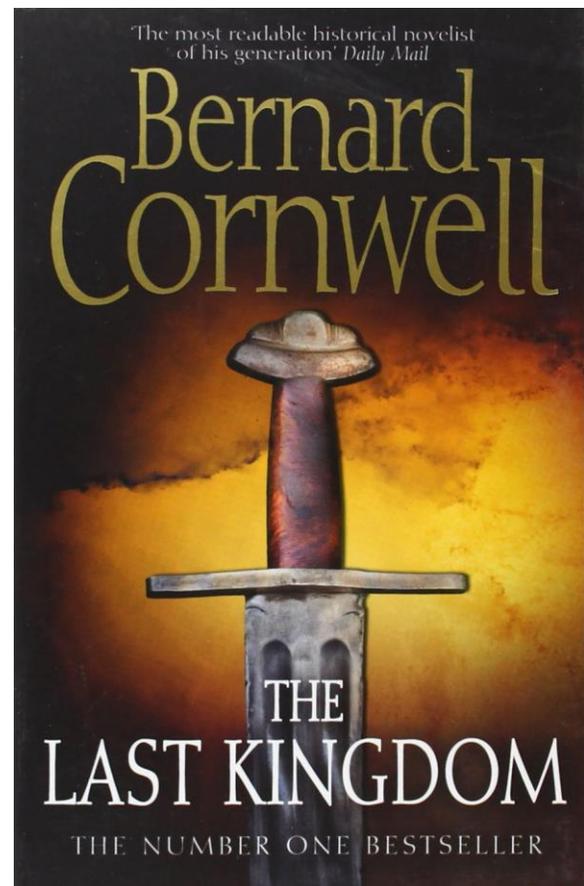
Bennett: Women, in your stories, can often be strong characters. In some cases they are chattel for the men in the story. Tell me about that?

Bernard: I like strong women.

One thing that always annoys me to hell is you're watching a movie, or a television program, and the couple will run away. So there running through the woods and they're being pursued by the villains. Nine times out of ten, the girl

trips over. I think, *why doesn't he trip over? Why is it always the girl?*

My girls don't trip over, that's all. There's no reason they should. I don't know if they're chattel; yes, they did have chattel. Women were a fungible object, in those days, in the sense they were worth money. When you took slaves, you killed the men and took the young women.



Bennett: You have characters, like Aethelflaed.

Bernard: She was real; she existed. She did lead armies against the Danes. I've

always been rather surprised that she's been forgotten by history. She's a good chick.

Bennett: And a very strong character as well as Uhtred's daughter, Stiorra. Those characters are central to your books and very strong women characters in a world that, I would call, male dominated.

Bernard: This is an era of Alpha males. Much like the Wild West – I'm sure you hate that phrase the *Wild West*. It's an environment where Alpha males dominate and the question is *how does a woman survive in a very brutal and violent society?*

One answer is to be a tough cookie.

The answer they came up with, in medieval Europe, was to basically invent chivalry. Chivalry was a code of behavior. It was very much women who pushed it. It was men who wrote the songs, but it was women who encouraged the idea of chivalry because it made these Alpha males behave better. When push came to shove, forget chivalry and start slaughtering.

It's a real difficulty. In a society where you're depending on force to keep the peace, or to do anything, you have to learn how to control those Alpha males. The culture of that society was people beating the shit out of people. Women

have endless weapons to control men, so I don't feel sorry for them.

Bennett: Religion, and the church, play a big part in your books. The old gods versus the new gods versus the Christian God. It's such a major thing in your books that I have to ask about it.

Bernard: There's two purposes behind it. One is that most of my heroes tend to be outsiders. Sharpe is up from the ranks. Nathaniel Starbuck is a northerner who fought for the Confederacy. They're different from the people around them, and one easy way to do that with Uhtred was to make him a pagan. He's in conflict with the dominant, overriding ethos of Wessex, which was Christian.

I'm not that fond of organized religion. You can make what you like of that.

Bennett: It really is such a central theme to both the Saxon series and *The Warlord Chronicles* that it's worth mentioning.

Bernard: Religion is pretty important to these people – it has to be. It's not until the sixteenth century that people begin to throw off the shackles of religion. It's easy to understand why. If you live in a pre-scientific, pre-technological age when there are no explanations for disaster: *Why did my child die? Why did the river flood? Why did the harvest fail?*

These are huge questions which affect your life and your happiness. The only answer you have for them is superstition. *The river flooded because the god in the river got angry with us. My child died because of some sin I committed.* Or whatever. You look for an explanation which your mind can grasp. It can't grasp a technological or scientific explanation because the equipment isn't there to give it.

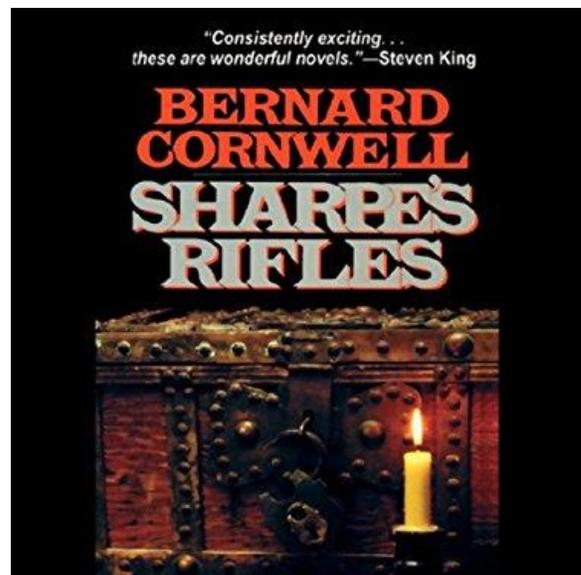
It's not really until the sixteenth century when western Europe began to recover some of the lost writings of the Romans and Greeks that they began to widen themselves out. So religion is incredibly important. Fate is important. You don't control your life. The gods control it or fate controls it. So you have to work very hard to stay on the right side of fate or your particular god.

Bennett: You can cross over, though, if someone else's gods are better than yours.

Bernard: Oh, yeah, you cross over. That was very normal – if you look at the Christianization of Europe. It didn't happen with missionaries going out and preaching to lots and lots of people. It happened by going to the kings of whatever country and converting them and then letting them convert the people.

One of the ways they did it was say: *Look, you're about to go to war with someone. I'll pray for you. If you win, you'll know it's the Christian God who gave you victory.* It worked nine times out of ten.

Bennett: A good deal of your stories have focus in the English isles. Did you get interested in English history when you were growing up?



Bernard: I got interested because I lived in an area with an awful lot of history. The county I grew up was Essex, and our church building had a free-standing Neolithic stone. The church itself was thirteenth century. There was a castle about half a mile away. For some strange reason, I just became fascinated by the whole thing.

You can feel exactly the same thing here [United States of America.] I split my

time between Cape Cod and Charleston. The alley I live on, in Charleston, was built in 1690. That's pretty old.

Bennett: Not compared to old in England.

Bernard: Yeah, but it's old enough to have the sharp corners, not smooth. Every morning I walk the dog and see Fort Sumter. I'd find it very hard to live in a place that didn't have history.

Bennett: Does surrounding yourself with history help you work?

Bernard: What helps me work is shutting myself up in a small room and being anti-social.

Bennett: Both *The Warlord Chronicles* and the Saxon series describes how bards chronicle the results of battles. Is that how common history was passed down?

Bernard: Some of what we have left is riddles. Some of it is religious. A very small amount is what we might call poetry. A hell of a lot of it is about battles. We'd know very little about the Battle of Maldon if a bard hadn't written a poem.

Beowulf is a very old story, and it is a story, and what is it about? It's about warriors. Much of the poetry is about warriors and extolling warriors.

Bennett: Do you have a favorite author?

Bernard: I love John Sandford. I read everything he writes. Because I can't write that stuff.

Bennett: What do you mean?

Bernard: Police procedurals. I think John is an amazing writer.

What I cannot read is historical novels. I spent thirty-six years writing them, and the last thing you want to do is sit down at night and read one. [laughs]

Bennett: So you like to read something totally different from your own?

Bernard: Totally different – but I do read a lot of history.

Bennett: Does John Sandford know how you feel about his books?

Bernard: Yes, we exchange e-mails. He actually has his hero, Lucas Davenport, reading a Sharpe book in one of his novels. So I'm not log rolling – I really like the guy.

Bennett: Do you ever listen to your books on tape or Audible?

Bernard: I don't listen to my books, and I don't reread them. I'm forced occasionally.

I had the whole Saxon series on one file, in my computer. If I'm dealing with a

character and I can't remember what I did with him or her, in a previous book, I just hit "find" and whip through ten books in three minutes to find out what I said about them. That's the extent of going back and rereading. I just don't do it.

Bennett: So you don't have a big board with all your characters and who they are?

Bernard: No, they're in my head. Every time I try to get organized, it fails. So I've given up trying.

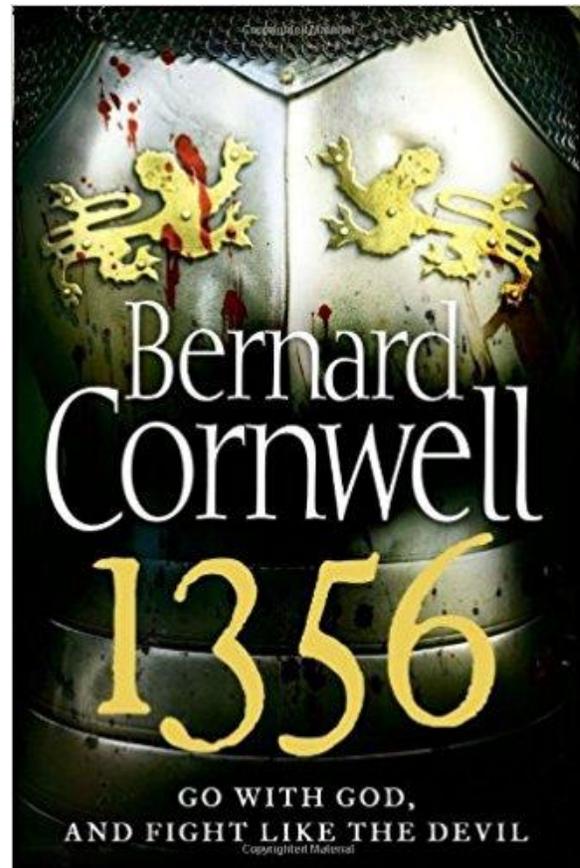
Bennett: The characters are so congruent from story to story. You can almost take any character and weave a thread of their own story.

Bernard: They're real to me. I hear them speak and see them in my mind's eye. They're old friends. So I don't need to really have notes on them. But I always forget, when one character only has one eye, I always forget which eye it is. So I go back to this big file and whip through until I find it.

Bennett: *1356*. It's somewhat different from your other books as it begins and ends in the same book. What made you pick that story and that time frame?

Bernard: I wanted to do another book set in the medieval period, and it's as simple as that. I'd written *Agincourt*, and

Battle of Pontiers was sitting out there waiting to be a story, so I said *let's do it*.



I don't think I'll go back to that period. It just struck me as an interesting story.

Bennett: The times in *The Warlord* series, pre 500AD, and before the Norman conquest in the Saxon series – are they times you always wanted to write about?

Bernard: Way back when I was a student, I came across Anglo-Saxon poetry and that interested me in the Saxons. The real interest in *The Warlord* series is the Arthurian story. It was an attempt to write a story about Arthur which restored him to his proper environment.

No big castles, no plate armor. That wasn't so much a period as it was a fascination with Arthur himself.

Certainly Uhtred is a fascination with a period.

Bennett: Derfel Cardarn is really telling the story in *The Warlord Chronicles* and he is much more like Uhtred. But the story is really about Arthur.

Bernard: Yes, when you're telling a story about someone, you don't want to have them as the main character. It would be too confining. The book I've just written, which I told you wouldn't interest you, is about the very first production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And, trust me, William Shakespeare is not the main character.

It's far more interesting to have a character who watches him, sees him, and talks about him. They probably don't like him that much. Derfel can observe Arthur like Uhtred can observe Alfred. Sharpe can observe Wellington.

That's the way I do it – it's not a rule. Other people write very successful novels where the protagonist is the main character in the period of history.

Bennett: What do you do in your down time?

Bernard: In the winter, I have very little down time because I tend to write. In the summer, I go sailing a lot and perform on stage at the summer stock theater.

Bennett: Really? In Charleston?

Bernard: No, no, Cape Cod.

Bennett: Oh, I get it. Cape Cod in the summer...

Bernard: ...Charleston in the winter.

It's a tough life.

Bennett: I read everything I can get my hands on that you write. I probably haven't read everything because I'm sidetracked by life. But it's been a great pleasure of mine to read your books, and I know many other readers who feel the same.

Bernard: I remember Dick Francis saying to me once that he hates people who say *I read your book in three or four hours*. He said, "It took me six months to put that plot together and they go through it in four hours."

Bennett: It's a shame, I guess. You get so involved, you don't want to put it down.

Bernard: I agree with you.

Bennett: Dick Francis' horse racing stories are very good.

Bernard: They were terrific.

Bennett: Do have any other interests? Is it just a lot of work and sailing?

Bernard: And the theater. Judy and I are both avid theater goers. The winter is really for writing and the summer for playing.

Bennett: I want to thank you for the pleasure of meeting you and the thrill of discussing your work with you.

Bernard: Thank you.

Bennett: I really look forward to continuing to read your books, and I've got to get in front of TV set and take in *The Last Kingdom*.

Bernard: I like it very much, so I hope you do too.

Bennett: They covered it true to your expectations?

Bernard: I think they did a terrific job.

Bennett: Once again, thank you for taking the time. It's been a pleasure.

Bernard: Thank you.



Send us your thoughts on this article at dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com

A YEAR OF EMAILS

BY TERRY IRVING



Yasutsune “Tony” Hirashiki in 1967

Last September, I received one of the nicest emails about my first novel, a thriller titled “Courier” about a Vietnam Vet carrying news film during the 1972 Watergate period. The writer said that he’d had the book printed out at his local Barnes & Noble and thought that I’d portrayed the “invisible wounds” of the Vietnam Vet exceptionally well. First off, I was

selling so few copies of Courier at the time, I could pinpoint his Espresso print, so any praise was fantastic; but what made it even more valuable was that it was from one of the legendary cameramen at ABC: Tony Hirashiki. Well, he prefers his real name, Yasutsune Hirashiki, but reporters on the battlefields couldn’t say “Yasutsune” fast enough so he was forcibly nicknamed.

Tony showed up in Saigon in 1966 with no English, a 16 mm Bell & Howell film camera, and a burning desire to be as good a war journalist as his idol, the famous Robert Capa. After 40 years, he retired from ABC News after having covered every war, disaster, and major event from the Cambodian Civil War to 9/11. His pictures were always beautiful, and his technical work from silent black and white film to color sound film to video tape to digital was flawless; but what was amazing was that everyone at ABC—from Ted Koppel to Sam Donaldson to every ABC President from Elmer Lower to David Westin—just adored this guy.

But he still couldn’t speak English.

We wrote emails back and forth, and it turned out that he had written his memoir of Vietnam, the people he’d worked with, the different cultures of the country and the journalists who came to cover the war. Sadly, he’d written it in Japanese.

It won Japan’s top prize for Non-Fiction in 2008 and Japanese TV and Radio did documentaries about him in 2009. What’s unusual is that Japan wasn’t involved in the Vietnam War, they had never seen any of the reports from the ABC reporters Tony worked with, and they didn’t much care. Clearly, it was a good book because it made people who knew nothing about the

subject care about these people and their problems.

At least I thought so. Like most of the people he wrote about, I can't read Japanese.

Okay, the language was a problem, but I had begun my career in TV News at ABC in 1973, and I knew most of the people in the book. When I did some research, I found that while there were books about reporters, and newspaper columnists, and still photographers, there was nothing about those who fulfilled a crucial role in the first "television war." The film cameramen who went right to the front lines and recorded the stress and the glory and the sorrow of the American fighting men.

It was simply a book that needed to be done, and it needed to be done in English.

I called up to chat with Tony (he and his family are American citizens now), but he didn't answer the phone because he didn't recognize the number and didn't want to be confused by some fast-talking American. So we began a year-long process of writing a book while communicating only in emails, much as authors and editors used letters for centuries but a complete anomaly today.

When Tony sent me the translations, I knew this was not going to be an easy job—I wasn't going to be able to move some commas around and fix a typo or two. It had been translated by computer, and if any of you bought a Japanese motorcycle or appliance back in the 70s, you might remember something I called "Jinglish." This was Japanese translated word-by-word into English with confusing and usually incomprehensible results. His family and friends had worked some of the chapters into clear

English, but the rest of the 215,000 words were like reading Esperanto.

Luckily, I had known most of the people he worked with, and I knew the techniques of film and the difficulties of shipping and editing material back in the days before videotape or microwave transmission or even more than a single satellite over the Pacific Ocean. Back then, the reporter and crew in the field would pack up the film, go over their notes, do a narration that matched to what they hoped was on the film and ship it off to Hong Kong or all the way to the States. Then it would be developed, and an editor, who hadn't been on the scene or spoken to the reporter, would cut it up into a story and bang it onto the Evening News.

I was a very small cog in this process. I rode a BMW motorcycle and would roar through Washington, carrying film back to the studio for processing. It's quite possible that I carried some of Tony's material but, to me, it would just have been an aluminum can with red tape around the side.

In addition, I'd been around television news long enough to be used to enormous projects done in ridiculous amounts of time: six documentaries in six weeks, 8 years of pulling out six-minute stories for Nightline in a single afternoon, years of mixing pieces as the video came in live for the morning show. So I was confident that we could turn Tony's book into English in a month or two.

It took over a year.

And it was worth every second.

What I found was that, like an oyster, Tony's book was a pearl beneath its rough exterior. Since he was Japanese, he observed these

Americans with fresh eyes that took in all their flaws but also perceived their bravery, intelligence, and determination. His book was about men and women who had simply realized that Vietnam was The Story of their Generation and gone to cover it, often without a job or even much money.

His heart had broken for the children, the families, and the all the grotesque destruction of war; but he also told of the courage of American soldiers and how they persevered through their own doubts and misgivings. He had written about the beauty of rice paddies in the dawn and the horror of bodies lying in the streets. He wrote about the personal success of becoming an excellent photojournalist—as alert to the instants of beauty as the hours of combat—and the heart-wrenching sorrow of losing friends, comrades, and mentors as the number of men and women who died covering Vietnam continued to mount.

Our emails were constant. Some days, they were fierce arguments over changes, other emails were like making up with your wife. We finished 11 months later with a book that was 175,000 words long (well, it was really 215,000 but I hid that part from everyone.) To our astonishment, Ron Goldfarb, the agent who had steered Stanley Karnow's "Vietnam: A History" onto the bookshelves took up Tony's book as a capstone to a storied career.

Ron had total faith in us, but no publisher was going to buy a book that big. So he gently hinted to me (if you know Ron, "gently" is not a word most would use about him) that I should edit the book a bit: like down from 175,000 to 99,000 words.

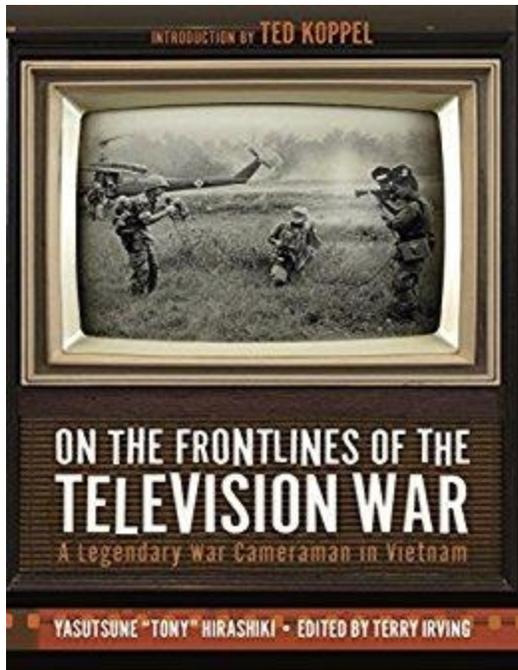
In television, a producer always ends up doing this—taking a script down by 25 seconds or by

half or whatever—and usually, the end result is better than the original. Crisper, more focused. It took another month to take an entire book out of the original manuscript (with Tony terrified that I would take out the good parts.) We sent the slim and trim version to Ron and, in less than a month, Casemate in England made an offer. A good offer and a promise to use the photographs and HD quality prints that ABC had made from Tony's original film.

Then, there was a call from Hackensack and the warm voice of a gentle man (whose accent isn't nearly as bad as he pretends it is). We talked for over an hour in celebration of a long and intense collaboration—all done without speaking.



Yasutsune "Tony" Hirashiki in Quang Tri – 1972



'On The Frontlines of the Television War' is the story of Yasutsune "Tony" Hirashiki's ten years in Vietnam—beginning when he arrived in 1966 as a young freelancer with a 16mm camera but without a job or the slightest grasp of English and ending in the hectic fall of Saigon in 1975 when he was literally thrown on one of the last flights out. Purchase your copy today from [Amazon](#).

TRACI WOLFE DISCUSSES HER PASSION FOR YOGA AND A NEW VENTURE FOR FITNESS

Traci Wolfe is known as the actress who played Rianne Murtaugh in the Lethal Weapon movies. We caught up with Traci, who has an entirely new field of interest, and found out a little about yoga and how we all can stay healthier!



How did you get interested in Yoga?

I began practicing yoga 6 years ago. I started practicing for the exercise but later learned the mental connection towards self-observation. I am Kripalu trained and Kripalu's philosophy is "self-observation without judgment." Little did I know, I was practicing with this

philosophy when I became aware of the mental part of yoga.

What are the main benefits of Yoga?

Practicing yoga keeps you mentally and physically flexible. My body aches when too much time passes when I don't practice yoga. I also practice for mental clarity. I include meditation in my practice. Sitting in stillness helps me to sort out things as much as a hiking alone. I also find joy in hiking meditations.

How would someone begin with Yoga?

I suggest someone visit a studio that is affiliated with Yoga Alliance. Yoga Alliance assures that the studio/teacher has met yoga certifications. Start with a beginner's class, then explore other gentle yoga classes.

What drove you to give up acting and start working in the world of Yoga?

I haven't given up acting. I just don't have the time to pursue it. I am open to opportunities from people who are looking specifically for me. Yogiventure, my yoga adventure company, keeps me very busy. I would have to really love the project to step away for a while. I LOVE Yogiventure and where it is going! Yogiventure combines outdoor activities with yoga. More people need to get outside. Pennsylvania has many beautiful parks. Yogiventure provides custom-tailored activities for corporate

events, bridal showers, team building, girlfriend getaways, camps, fundraisers and personal growth.

What are the long-term effects of sticking with Yoga?

Practicing yoga daily keeps you balanced and flexible. Yoga is great for all ages and abilities. There are so many versions available. For example, I teach chair yoga and have taught power yoga. Yoga should be added to an existing workout.



Who would Yoga benefit?

Everyone benefits from yoga. There are so many different disciplines. You just need to find the right one and begin practicing.

How can people find out more about you, and your work?

Visit www.yogiventure.com or check out my YouTube channel – Yogiventure. They can follow me on Instagram at Yogiventureofficial or on Facebook at Yogiventure.

What are you currently working on?

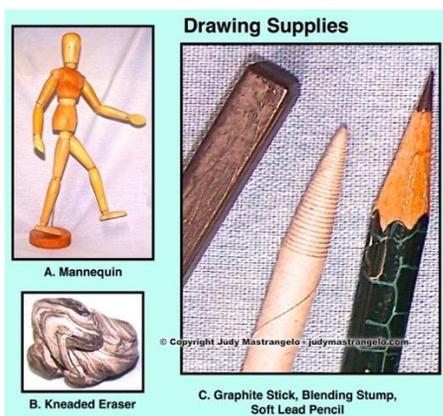
Yogiventure keeps me very busy!

HOW TO DRAW FIGURES BY ARTIST JUDY MASTRANGELO

I'd like to talk about **Drawing Figures**.

1. As I had mentioned in my previous article about Drawing Faces, it is always a good idea to study anatomy. From my experience, knowing about the structure of the human body is essential to being able to draw and paint the figure. I have studied the drawings of [Leonardo da Vinci](#) who was a master artist with a great facility in the way the body functions. Another wonderful artist that I would suggest you study is [Andreas Vesalius](#). He was a 16th century Flemish anatomist and is often considered the "Founder of Human Anatomy."

2. There are several good **Drawing Tools** that I suggest you purchase:



A. A small wooden **Artist's Mannequin** is an excellent thing you can purchase, which can be moved around

to simulate many positions. You can practice drawing with this mannequin, and it's often used to aid artists when they are doing a painting of the human figure.

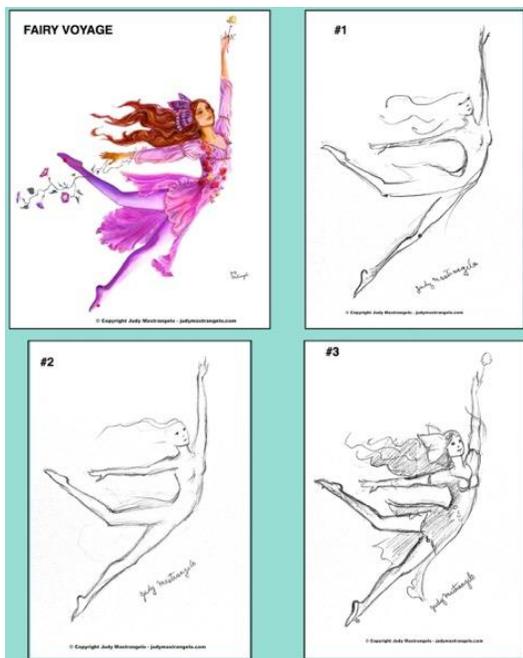
B. An artist's **Kneaded Eraser**, is excellent to correct mistakes. You knead this rubber eraser like bread, so that the graphite gets absorbed. It is very good for pencil, charcoal, and pastels.

C. **Graphite Sticks** are good for filling in larger areas in your drawing.

Blending Stumps are rolled up pieces of paper that come in various sizes. Artists use them to blend penciled-in areas for shading, rather than using their fingers to blend with. It saves their hands from getting dirty.

Medium soft **Lead Pencils** are also good to use. If the lead is too hard, (labeled H), it might be too difficult to erase, and if they are too soft, (such as 6B), they will be too smudgy and messy. I generally use 2B or 4B pencils.

3. I will show you the preliminary sketches I made for my painting "FAIRY VOYAGE."



#1. It could start off as just a line drawing to show movement.

#2. Then I block it with squares, circles, ovals, etc. I draw lightly until I find the correct lines. Then I can make my drawing darker. I do this because it's much more difficult to erase a dark pencil line than a light one.

#3. Finally, after I have an understanding of my subject matter, and know that I have the correct lines, I can finish my drawing. I make my lines darker and can shade it with a Blending Stump.

I enjoy portraying the figure in motion. In this instance, she is posed in a way that would be impossible for a human, but perfectly easy for a fairy to do! She's getting ready to take off in flight from the very tip of a flower. It's fun to make

fantasy real, and even be able to defy gravity in a painting.

I also make my adult male and female figures at least six heads tall, sometimes even seven. I feel this gives them an elegant, regal quality. If I want to depict a younger person or child, I will make them five heads tall or less. Making a figure's head larger makes them appear more youthful also.



You can see the male and female figures in my painting "GARDEN OF THE SUN AND MOON" in contrast with the height of my little "MORNING GLORY FAIRY."



I've drawn shapes on top of these paintings so that you can see how one can break up the human figure into circles, triangles, and lines, in a simplified way. After you begin in this way, you will be able to refine and develop your technique in drawing the human figure.

In my painting "EXCALIBUR," I've attempted to show a dramatic composition, with the theme of young Arthur's exuberance in pulling Excalibur from the stone. I show here, in a simplified stick drawing of yellow lines, the movement and action lines of his body leading up to the sword. I use this to help the figure show emotion and drama.



Draw your objects very lightly at first. Plan what you want to draw first with very light and soft lines. When you are satisfied with these lines, and feel that they are just the way you want them, then you can make them darker. If you start off with very dark lines in the very beginning, and you are not happy with what you did, it is very difficult to erase these lines. And believe it or not, when

you begin a painting, the same exact circumstance will also apply.

I'll always feel, from my experience, that in order to become a good artist, you must also become very good at learning to draw well. I've found that being an excellent draftsman, and learning to control your drawings with a pencil, can really help when you do a painting.

So practice drawing figures as often as you can. I think you'll find it a real delight.

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 which are very helpful.

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

My books are going to be published by DSP very soon, under the new imprint title of "IMAGINATION BOOKS." They will include many exciting titles in several formats, including AUDIO BOOKS, EBOOKS, 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, ANGELS, 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

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

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AUTHOR WELDON SHAW LEARNED HIS CRAFT THE HARD WAY



By Westerner© Editor Bruce Bennett

Twenty-five years in law enforcement will teach a man quite a few lessons. For Author Weldon Shaw, it taught him how to hone a good story.

Weldon was a tough gang investigator whose specialty was debriefing violent gang members marked for death. You would think that would sour a man toward the world, but the experience

worked opposite for the accomplished author.

The stories these hardened criminals told were not only fascinating, but Weldon found each could make its own book. He dug deeply into the gang members' pasts to find out about their beginnings and then developed their stories all the way to the present. These briefs helped the writer to understand how to begin, develop, and close a good read.

When he retired from law enforcement, a few years ago, he decided to keep on writing. His first book, *The Rise and Fall of Our Youth*, drew on his experiences and knowledge of gangs and their activities to help parents understand how to influence their own children away from a path to destruction.

He followed up this popular first offering with a historical fiction on the origins and development of gangs called *Pachuco*. This book traced the history of Hispanic gangs to their beginnings in the 1860s. These gangs, the author told me, were the first of their kind in the United States. Weldon also told me that he enjoyed researching the history of the book almost as much as writing.

When he was done, as is his practice, he sent the book to a number of trusted readers for feedback. He was surprised

to hear the reaction of his critics. Each told him that he had a real winner with Pachuco and, with a little more editing, finally released it to the market.



Weldon then turned to a subject that interested him since he began writing. The author is part Chickasaw and wanted to write a real story about native Americans. *Lone Wolf, A New Beginning* was the first offering in his now popular and best-selling Western book series.

He explained that he strives to allow the characters to dictate the action. In the *Lone Wolf* series, the reader will encounter some of the most endearing and strong characters in literature. The main character sets off with his family, from their Kentucky home, to settle in

the West. However, his father is a novice at traveling and soon puts the family in peril.

When all die, except the main character, from disease, the Cheyenne come across the young man among the bodies. Their leader sees "great medicine" in the boy's eyes and decides to take him to their village. The author explains this was a common practice. The chief's daughter, who recently lost her own husband, is given the task of acclimating the newcomer.

Fawn becomes more enraptured with the young man until they fall in love and marry. In his reincarnation of Lone Wolf, the new Cheyenne warrior has many adventures. Battles with the Creek Indians and insidious white slavers are two of the problems he faces.

Weldon followed his initial success with a second book called *Lone Wolf, the Resurrection*. In his second book in the series, he continues to develop the story of the white Indian. The author explains that he draws from his own single mother to create strong women characters in his story. Fawn is a great example of this. She continues to be the strength behind her man as he grows into a great warrior.

The author is putting the finishing touches on the third book in the *Lone*

Wolf series. He has some good ideas for novels, some started and in the drawer, and hopes to continue to write Westerns. He explains that historical fiction is his passion, and he enjoys the time period in which his series takes place.

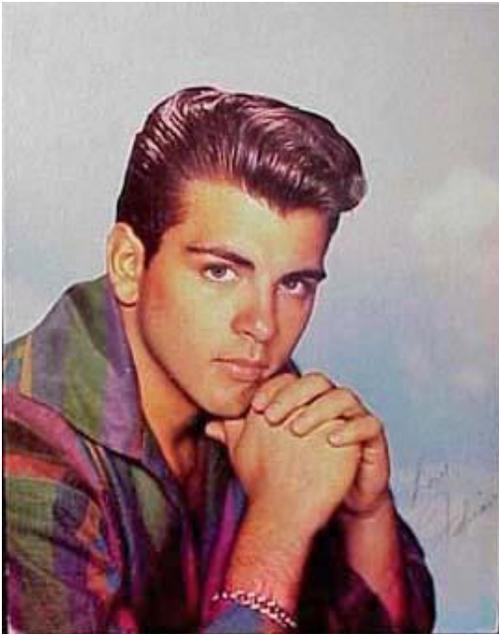
Weldon's method of stress relief is playing the guitar, piano, and writing music. He's submitted some of his music to publishers who've given him some great feedback. Let's hope the author doesn't go off on a successful music career before he finishes those Westerns!

BB

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We always say, "Frankie, what did you play?" "Well, I played trumpet." "And Bobby, what did you play?" "I played drums." "And what did Fabian play?" And we'd say, "He played the radio."

Nick: Fabian, if I remember correctly, wasn't the great singer you two guys were, was he?



Bobby Rydell: To this day, Fabian will say that. We've been doing a show since 1985. Frankie Avalon, Fabian, and myself. The show is called *The Golden Boys*. Started it back in 1985, and it was a huge, huge, success. I turned to Frankie and said, "You know, Frank, this is great, it's wonderful. But how long is it going to last? A year, two years tops, and then it's over." Well, that was 1985. It's now 2017, we're still doing the show, and it's a sellout everywhere we go.

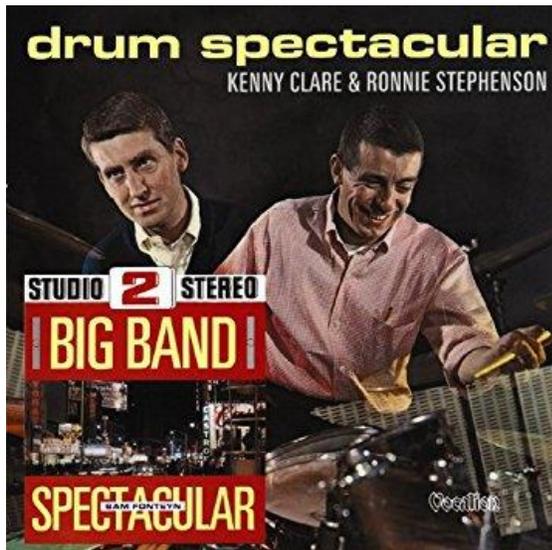
Nick: I can believe it, too. I mean, look at all the hits you've got between you. You've got more million-sellers than any one artist put together, I would think.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah, absolutely. Not only do we do our hits, but there's a lot of comradery on stage. There's comedy, and we also do a tribute to some of the artists who have passed away. Frankie does Ricky Nelson. Fab does Presley. I do Bobby Darin. Then we come back on and we do Bill Haley's *Rock Around the Clock*. And then we end up with *Give Me That Old Time Rock and Roll*. The audience just goes nuts. They go crazy.

Nick: I bet. When are you going to come here, to England? That's the question.

Bobby Rydell: It's been so long since I've been to the U.K. I think the last time I was there was about 1963, and I toured two weeks with Helen Shapiro, who was a marvelous, marvelous, singer. To this day, she's still singing great. I would love to come over with the guys, with Avalon and Fabian. I think it would do fantastically well. I remember my first time over, specifically in London, I did *The Talk of the Town*, which of course now is *The Hit Patrol*. Then doing the *London Palladium*, and I remember the MC was a gentleman named Jack Parnell. He was the MC of the T.V. show, *Live at the London Palladium*, and I think Ronnie Verril was the drummer at the time. I don't know if you remember any of these names but, me being a drummer and a jazzer, I loved that kind of music. A very dear friend of mine,

who passed away, was Kenny Clare. Kenny Clare was probably the best drummer who ever came out of the U.K. I would say there was one other guy, by the name of Phil Seaman, who was a great drummer.



But, Kenny Clare, the first time I met him was when I recorded for Pi. I was out there with Ann-Margaret. We did a command performance for the Royal Family when *Bye Bye Birdie* just came out. And I recorded with Tony Hatch. Tony Hatch wrote my last million-seller, back in 1963, a song called *Forget Him*. And who was playing drums on *Forget Him*? Kenny Clare, playing brushes. He was absolutely fantastic. My drummer, and I were at the Boston-Logan airport and who was there? Kenny Clare and Johnny Dankworth and Ronnie Verrell were in the airport coming to Philadelphia. So David and I said, "Would you like to go out to dinner with us?" He said, "Yeah, man, that'd be wonderful. It would be great."

So we took them out to dinner, then I took them over to my house, and we started playing stuff that he didn't remember. As a matter of fact, there was an album out, it was Kenny Clare and Ronnie Stephenson on an album called *Drum Spectacular*.

Nick: I have that one.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, it's a great album. I've always been a jazzer, and Kenny Clare was just marvelous. He was just a marvelous player.

Nick: He really was. You know, I always thought that was a particularly good album. But nobody else has ever mentioned it apart from you.

Bobby Rydell: I guess a lot of people aren't aware of Kenny Clare. But I remember one thing he did with Tony Bennett. I think it was *Mimi*. You know, *Mimi*?

Nick: Yeah.

Bobby Rydell: Dun, dun, doon, dun...

Nick: Yeah. (Laughs)

Bobby Rydell: Kenny Clare was playing brushes. (Brush noises) He had the sticks under his arms and when they get through, like the first time through, he drops the brushes and he gets the sticks from under his arms and now he's on the right. Ditling, ditling, ditling, ditling... And we said, my drummer, David, and I said, "How did he make that transition?"

He said, "Well, I've got the sticks under my arms. I dropped the brushes. As soon as I dropped the brushes, I got my right hand and boom! Cymbal time! Phenomenal.

Nick: There was an album you made that was over here on, like a cheapie label, Summit. Do you remember anything about that?

Bobby Rydell: Not at all.

Nick: It was real early recordings, it was. And it was on Summit. Let me see if I can find the songs.

Bobby Rydell: Was that like, *Fatty Fatty*, and *Dream Age*, and stuff like that?

Nick: I think so. Yeah. Before you signed with a proper label, maybe.

Bobby Rydell: Before Cameo maybe. Yeah, that was terrible. That was just terrible.

Nick: Well, I bought that one. And I was very disappointed. And I always wondered what was up with it. I thought it was just me. (Laughs)

Bobby Rydell: No. No. No. As a matter of fact, there were these two guys from the Baltimore–Washington area. My manager, Frankie Day, and my dad put up money for me. I think I was about fifteen years old. And we went into studio and recorded these songs. They split with the tapes and they left us with the recording costs and so on and so forth. They flew the coop, these two guys, with all of the tapes. As the years

went by and I became successful, this stuff started to come out. And we originally recorded it on a label called Veko. V-E-K-O. Blue and white label. And now it's out and you can find it just about everywhere, and the tunes are really terrible.

Nick: I remember that one because I didn't have much money to spend on records. And this one was always popping up for a buck, or a pound. It was always a real cheap album to get. And the songs sound great. *Dream Age*, that sounds like a hit.

Bobby Rydell: Do you think so?

Nick: Until you listen to it, anyway. But the name's great. So, I'm standing in the record store, and I've got a little bit of money and I thought, "Bobby Rydell, great singer, did all this stuff on Capital, I've heard it." So I get it, get it home, and it's *Slang Book*.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, yeah. Oh, that was another gem.

Nick: *Fatty, Fatty* did become a hit in the end, didn't it?

Bobby Rydell: I don't think so. No.

Nick: Didn't it become a little hit? A minor hit?

Bobby Rydell: That was a terrible record.

Nick: It would be considered politically incorrect now.

Bobby Rydell: Any record that starts off, Ba,ba,ba-bom, Ba ba, ba-bom. Ba, ba,

ba-bom... How the hell can that become a hit?

Nick: (Laughs) We'll have to put the sound effects in the interview.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, it needs a lot of sound effects.

Nick: It sure does. The tuba, yeah. So you were in *Bye Bye Birdie* with maybe the most beautiful woman in the world, right?

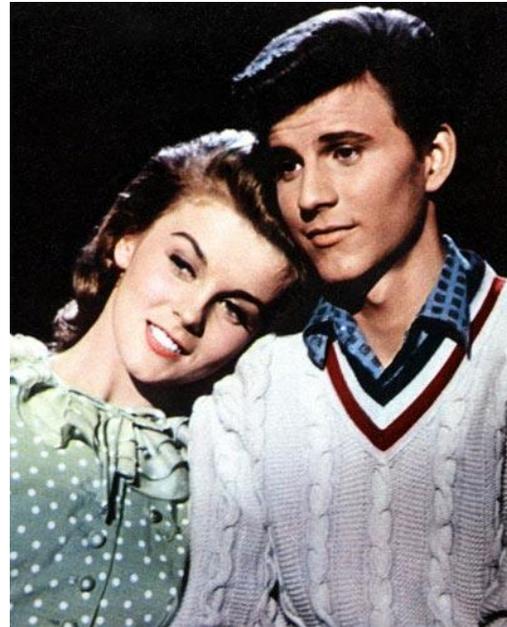
Bobby Rydell: Who? Janet Leigh?

Nick: No. Ann-Margaret.

Bobby Rydell: (Laughs) Ann-Margaret.

Nick: Did you enjoy it?

Bobby Rydell: Absolutely. To this day, Ann and I are very, very close. As a matter of fact, in my new book, *Bobby Rydell: Teenage Idol on the Rocks*, I called Ann and I said, "Kim," - because she was Kim Macafee, and I was Hugo Peabody in *Bye, Bye Birdie* - I said, "Would you write a blurb for me?" And she did.



I was in Florida, and she called me on my cell. I was in the shower, so she left a voice mail. She said, "Bobby, I just read your book. I didn't know all the problems that you've had and what you went through." She said, "God bless you. You have my cell. Please call me."

So, I was leaving Florida from the Orlando airport and I called her. We had a great conversation. I said, "Ann, if you remember back in 1963, I was twenty and you were only twenty-one. Why the hell didn't we get married?" She laughed, but she is an absolute sweetheart. I talk to her every couple of months or so, just to keep in touch, see how one another is doing.

Nick: That was a great movie as well. That was a real era-defining movie. That was a good one.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. It was a classic.

Nick: It certainly is. You only did a couple of movies, though, right?

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. If I did any movie, of course, to be associated with *Bye, Bye Birdie* was classic. I never enjoyed the west coast, meaning Hollywood, Los Angeles. I was always an east coast guy, Philadelphia, New York, northern New Jersey, southern New Jersey. And I could never make the move out to the west coast. To this day, I don't like the west coast.

Nick: The only parts of your country I've seen are Texas and California. My wife's from California and she made me spend a month there. Yeah. And then, I was happy to come home. (Laughs)

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. I agree. It's oh-so-nice to go traveling, but it's oh-so-nice to come home. And that's the God's honest truth.

Nick: Yeah. I hope to see Philadelphia at some point, because I hear it's such a great city. I'm a book promoter by trade. Most of my clients are American anyway. I promote books and I help them get the word out. A good deal are from Philadelphia, and they say, "You should come here. You should come here." So, I'm hoping to see it.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, absolutely, Nick. You'd love it here. You'd absolutely love it here. Philadelphia's a great, great city. They call it the City of Brotherly Love - and it is. The people are very respectful. And being from an area called South Philadelphia was very, very ethnic.

Mostly Italian, Irish, Jewish, and everybody got along. Back in the late forties, early fifties, you could leave your front door open, you could leave your windows open, and nobody would come into your house. But, unfortunately, those days are gone and they'll never come back again. Now you need locks on your doors and you're scared. You're really scared.

Nick: It's getting that way here, too. The crime is certainly creeping up.

Bobby Rydell: Well, my God. Looking at what you guys have been going through with terrorists and so forth. And not only yourselves, but in France, and in Belgium. You go, "What the hell's this world coming to, for crying out loud?" I'm not a very political guy. I am Republican. I've always been Republican, and I certainly hope that Trump will be able to do something. I certainly hope so. He's got a long road, a tough road to haul, but I like the guy. I like the guy. He's trying to do things, and we'll see what happens.

Nick: Only time will tell. You stopped recording for a while after Capital. Were you just touring and keeping busy, or were you trying to find a record deal, or what was going on?

Bobby Rydell: No. After I left Capital, I signed with Reprise and that was all because of Mr. Sinatra. I had the good fortune of being in Mr. Sinatra's company, and we became pretty close friends. He enjoyed me, and of course, I enjoyed Mr. Sinatra. He called me

Robert, and he said, "Robert, I'd like to have you on my label."



And I said, "Well, what time do you want me there, and how much money do you want, Mr. Sinatra? I'll pay you..."

So, I signed with Reprise. We had some pretty good songs with Reprise, but nothing ever happened. Two of the songs, one was called *The River is Wide*, and *The Loving Things*. I'm trying to remember the band that covered it. They had hits. I had the first two recordings on Reprise, but nothing ever happened with me.

Nick: I never did see those Reprise records hanging around.

Bobby Rydell: They're probably really rare and very hard to get.

Nick: Do you have copies of them, though?

Bobby Rydell: You know what? I don't think so. I really don't think so.

Nick: After the Capital album, there was nothing I could find in England until you something on something called PIP, in 1976.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah, yeah. We did the disco version of *Wild One* and *Sway*.

Nick: *Sway* was a really good version, as well.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. Absolutely. It really was. It became a medium hit for me here in the U.S., and a little bit in Canada. Nothing to blow your skirt up. But they were good records.

Nick: I guess keeping active and recording is part of the game, just getting new stuff and making new albums and the rest of it. I suppose that's as much fun as having hit records.

Bobby Rydell: I would love to go into a studio, at this particular stage in my life, and just go in with a trio or quartet. Like piano, drums, and maybe a tenor saxophone, and just do songs from the *American Songbook*. And just sing songs, some really great, great tunes. Whether it does anything or it doesn't, it's something that I would enjoy doing.

Nick: Are you currently under contract to anybody?

Bobby Rydell: No. No. Recording-wise you mean?

Nick: Yeah.

Bobby Rydell: No. I'm not under contract with anyone.

Nick: I'm surprised they haven't snapped you up. They have Tony Bennett making records.

Bobby Rydell: God bless him.

Nick: Yeah. He keeps knocking around. I'm surprised they don't snap you up and have you in a studio, doing something.

Bobby Rydell: Ah, wouldn't that be great to do a duet with Tony Bennett?

Nick: Hasn't he called you yet?

Bobby Rydell: No, he hasn't called.
(Laughs)

Nick: (Laughs) He will. He just needs to read this interview, that's all.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, okay. That would be wonderful.

Nick: No, it's interesting, because you are still very active and busy doing stuff.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Nick: You've written a book, haven't you?



Bobby Rydell: Yeah. That's correct. It's called *Bobby Rydell: Teen Idol on the Rocks: A Tale of Second Chances*.

Nick: It's doing well, right? It's selling well?

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. The book is doing very well. Yes.

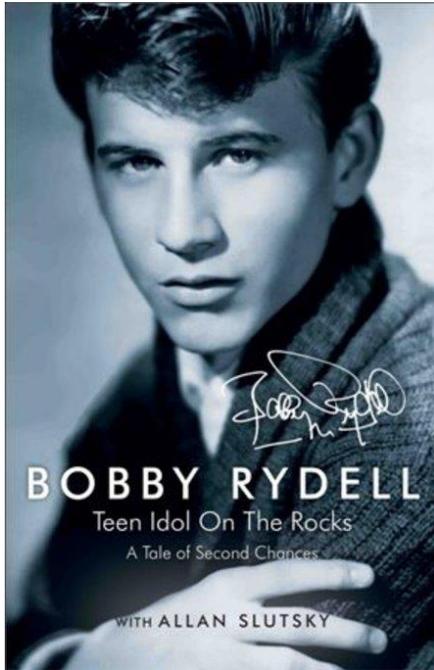
Nick: What I wanted to say was, what was it like writing the book? Did you have a good time with it? Or was it tough going through those past memories?

Bobby Rydell: There were times where it was extremely tough, Nick. I sat down with a gentleman by the name of Allan Slutsky, who is a marvelous musician, a guitar player here in Philadelphia. He also did a documentary about standing in the shadows of Motown, about the Funk brothers. He's a very, very fine writer, and we sat down for two years and I poured my heart out, Nick.

The book is brutally honest. There's a lot of things in the book that people don't know about Bobby Rydell. Like I said, "If I'm going to do this, Allan," I said, "I have to be extremely sincere, brutally honest, and tell things that people really don't know about Bobby Rydell. Meaning family, my alcohol problem, my liver and kidney transplant. I've been through a lot. I've been through an awful lot. There are things that people are not really aware of, because I was always like, "Oh, he's the squeaky clean kid." He was so skinny, we had to take him home and feed this kid. (Chuckle)

Nick: That's the thing. Number one, you're always perennially young. You're always twenty years old. Any album cover, you always seem like you're a kid. The other thing is, you never seem in any way bad tempered, or grumpy, or

even upset. It must be real strange for your fans to read this book that isn't all just happy stuff.



Bobby Rydell: Like I said to begin with, I wanted it to be brutally honest. There are things about my mom in the book that were very hard to talk about. My mom, she was evil. She was a very evil person. But everybody loved my mother. They always thought that she was such a sweetheart, but once you got into the house and the doors closed, you knew the [real] Jenny Ridarelli and she wasn't a very nice person at all. But people can read about that in the book.

Nick: Yeah. It's interesting because, of course, the publicity machine kind of twists and turns people into what the record labels want - or what the companies want. Do you ever worry that admitting the truth about anything, or telling the truth will damage your

career? Or damage the way people view you? Did you ever worry about that when you were writing the book?

Bobby Rydell: No, Nick, no. Because, once again, please excuse me for being redundant, but I just wanted it to be brutally honest. And that's the way the book came out. I've been doing a lot of book signings and so forth, and people just come up to me and say, "Bobby, what a wonderful book. You really poured your heart out and wrote things that we didn't know about you which we know now. And we're happy, we're so happy, that you poured your heart out and you came out with a really marvelous book."

Nick: I'm glad. Are you going to write a fiction book any time soon?

Bobby Rydell: A fiction book?!

Nick: Yeah. Write a Western. They're real hot at the moment.

Bobby Rydell: Nah. My fiction book would be Ann-Margaret and Bobby Rydell get married. (Laughs)

Nick: I hope your wife isn't around listening, Bobby.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, I think she's hanging around here somewhere.

Nick: You made some records with Chubby Checker, right?

Bobby Rydell: Correct.

Nick: They were great records, weren't they?

Bobby Rydell: Oh, yeah. It was an album called *Chubby Checker and Bobby Rydell*. And, matter of fact, when I first premiered my book in New York City at a restaurant called Patsy's, Paul Schafer came to the restaurant. I've always enjoyed Paul Schafer, and one of the songs that I recorded that's a major hit here in the States is a song called *Wildwood Days*, and it has to deal with a place in Wildwood, New Jersey. It's a summer resort, beach resort. He loved *Wildwood Days*, but he said, "There's one thing, man, that you did on that album called *Your Hits and Mine*. Man, I love that tune."



That's where Chubby would sing *Wild One*, and *Sway*, and *Volare*, and I would do *The Pony*, and *Twistin'*, and *Let's Twist Again*. It was a very, very successful album. And Chubby and I are still friends to this day.

Nick: He's lives in Philly, too. Doesn't he?

Bobby Rydell: He's not far from me. He's only about, I would say, ten miles.

Nick: I was reading the other day where someone was raving about his show. They were raving about how good his show was.

Bobby Rydell: He's still working. He's working feet. He twists so much that one of these days, my God, he's going to screw himself to the ground one of these days and we'll never see him again.

Nick: Did you know Eddie Fisher?

Bobby Rydell: I never met Eddie, no. Although he only lived on Sixth Street, five blocks away, but that was a whole, completely different, era. He was in the service with my manager, Frankie Day, who was a base player. My manager's real name is Francesco Coulky and they were in the army together. My manager played bass for him on a couple of shows that he did while he was in the service.

Nick: I always thought he was a pretty good singer.

Bobby Rydell: Absolutely. He married Elizabeth Taylor. He couldn't be all that bad.

Nick: Exactly. He had two of the most beautiful woman in the world, didn't he? Really, though, I think we've got a pretty good interview, Bobby. I'll think of ten million things when I get off this call, but did I miss anything?

Bobby Rydell: Maybe one thing. Back in '63 I was traveling with Helen Shapiro. I haven't seen Helen in years, but she still

to this day singing, absolutely fantastic. We were traveling on a bus, and we were doing two weeks of one-nighters throughout the U.K. We were traveling and it was somewhere around ten, eleven o'clock in the evening. There was a car in front of us, and she said, "There are the Beatles." My drummer and I started looking around the bus for some sort of cockroaches or something. We didn't know. She said Beatles, you know?

The car stopped and the four guys get on the bus. They know me. It's 1963, and I met these four guys. I think, *they're really nice guys*, but I figured they were just a band that was gigging. They were doing clubs, they were doing a wedding, or wherever the hell they were going. We shook hands and they went on their way. Helen and I went our way on the bus.



So, I go home, back to the United States, and six months later I saw them on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. I said, "Oh, my God. I met those guys! I really met those guys!" To this day, Nick, I kick myself in the ass, because what a great picture that would have been. Somewhere in the middle of the U.K., at ten-thirty, eleven o'clock in

the evening, and the four of those guys come on the bus to say "Hello."

You know, I saw McCartney about a year ago, at a place here in Philadelphia called the Wachovia Center. And of course, it was packed, and I had the opportunity to go. Me and my wife, we went backstage and he was gracious enough to come out and take a picture. I said, "Paul, do you remember back in 1963, you guys were in a car and we met on a bus?" He really couldn't remember it, and he said, "I think something..." with the cockney accent. But he was very nice, and right here in my office I have a picture with Paul, my wife, and myself. Great picture.

Nick: It's amazing how these things pass, though. Of course, you were a bigger star than them at that point, when you met them.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. They were just four guys. They were just gigging, playing a club date somewhere. And they probably were at that point. Then boom! Six months later, all of the sudden, (sings) "We love you, ya, ya, ya..."

Nick: It's a shame they didn't tell you about their record. You could have gone back to the States and covered it before they did. Then you'd have a hit. They'd have been pre-empted by Bobby Rydell. Can you imagine that? Wouldn't that have been a hell of a thing? The Beatles who?

Bobby Rydell: (Laughs)

Nick: Hey, I've got a question I want to ask you. If you were talking to a kid, who didn't know anything about your records and didn't know who you were, and you wanted to play him one of your records, which one would you go for?

Bobby Rydell: Well, my signature song right now, my walk-on music and my walk-off music, my bow music I guess, would be *Volare*. I guess it would be my first million-seller, which would be *Wild One*, back in 1960.

Nick: Ah, that was a great one.

Bobby Rydell: Thank you.

Nick: How many million-sellers did you have?

Bobby Rydell: I had three. *Wild One* was the first. *Volare* was the second. And then Tony Hatch wrote *Forget Him*.

Nick: *Forget Him* is a great one, too.

Bobby Rydell: It was a great record. It was recorded at IH Studios in London. That's what Kenny Clare was playing brushes on, *Forget Him*.

Nick: You're just lucky that *Fatty, Fatty* wasn't a million seller, and you'd be remembered for it. (Laughs)

Bobby Rydell: I'd have to hear that for the rest of my life. Geez.

Nick: A hit is a hit, I guess, even if it is a bad hit. (Laughs) No, the first record I ever heard of yours wasn't any of those. It was *We've Got Love*.



Bobby Rydell: That was my second hit. That came right after a song called *Kissing Time*. *Kissing Time* was my first hit, back in the summer of 1959. My second hit was *We've Got Love*. Then my third hit was my first million seller, *Wild One*.

Nick: Do you remember *Because of You*?

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. As a matter of fact, I think it was on the *We've Got Love* album. I don't know what it was called in the U.K., but here it was called *We've Got Love*. I did *Because of You*.

Nick: Yeah. That album had the black cover and you were sideways.

Bobby Rydell: Sideways, I think with a red sweater.

Nick: That was a hell of an album. I remember getting that one.

Bobby Rydell: Yeah. Not a bad album at all. That was my first album on Cameo.

Nick: Well, you've got *Teach Me Tonight* which is, of course, the jazzy stuff. Then didn't *What Do I Say* close it out?

Bobby Rydell: The Ray Charles thing? *What Do I Say?*

Nick: That closed out that album, didn't it?

Bobby Rydell: I believe you're right. I believe you're right. Yeah.

Nick: You see, this is why I can hold people up for hours. I can go through every single one of your albums, and say "Do you remember this song?" "Do you remember *So Rare?*" "Do you remember *That Old Black Magic?*"

Bobby Rydell: Absolutely. I think that was *Bobby Salutes the Great Ones*.

Nick: Yeah. I've got that one, too.

Bobby Rydell: Where it was like, Bing Crosby, and Al Jolsen, and Sinatra. Yeah.

Nick: That's when I realized that you guys from Philadelphia could sing anything.



Bobby Rydell: Well, thank you.

Nick: Because Darin was doing similar stuff, but then that should be better known, I always thought. That one album.

Bobby Rydell: I think it did fairly well. It sold quite a few albums. Once again, as far as going back to those days, I've been extremely lucky with my career to be able to still, after a double transplant with a new liver and a new kidney, and then a year later a double bypass. I really didn't know if I'd be able to get back up on stage again, because of everything that I went through. This is all I've known since I was seven years old, when my dad first took me around to clubs in Philadelphia. And if that would have been a part of my life that would have gone, I really wouldn't know exactly what I would do.

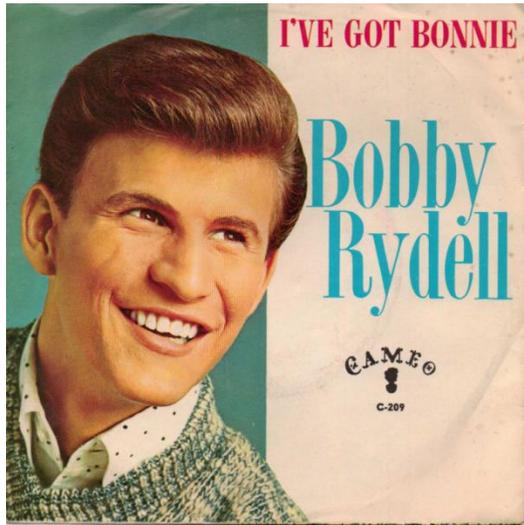
So, I'm so thankful. I thank the dear Lord for looking after me, and probably saying, "Bobby, I don't want you right now. We're going to let you stay around for a couple more years and do what you enjoy doing." It was a miracle, the way it happened. I'm so fortunate, really fortunate, to be able to do what I enjoy doing.

Nick: I'm glad you're still doing it, because I want to see you live someday.

Bobby Rydell: I certainly hope so. I want to come to the U.K. so bad.

Nick: Well, you'll sell one ticket, because I'll buy one.

Bobby Rydell: Okay. At least I got one guy.



Nick: I'm really happy to hear that you got your transplant, and that you're back in full swing. I know that it was touch and go there for a while.

Bobby Rydell: I was about two weeks away from meeting my maker. If I didn't get the transplant, I would have been dead in two weeks.

Nick: I tell you, Bobby, I'm not joking about having all your records. I'm just going to turn my laptop so you can see [via Skype] the records I've got, because I know people probably tell you a lot that they have all your records. But somewhere in this mass... Let me turn this around. Your records are in there somewhere.

Bobby Rydell: Oh, my... Wow! Fantastic.

Nick: Do you still collect records?

Bobby Rydell: Not really. The records that I have I've had since, oh my God, I'll

be seventy-five in April so I've had these records since I was eighteen—twenty years old. I don't buy records.

Nick: I do. I never did flip to the CD. There's something about them.

Bobby Rydell: Well, you can't beat vinyl. Let's face it.

Nick: Well, I won't take up any more of your time. I'm sure you've got a lot of other things to do, but I really did enjoy meeting you. Thank you.

Bobby Rydell: Thank you so much, Nick.

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Send us your comments on this article at dustysaddlepublishing@gmail.com

REDISCOVERING THE WEST WITH AUTHOR MIKE HUNDLEY



By Westerner© Editor Bruce Bennett

Mike Hundley is a name you may have heard of over the last few months. His book, "Gunsight Justice," has been dancing around on the bestseller list for a long time now. It's no wonder that Hundley has become such a bestseller—his easy-to-talk-to style, his seriously readable prose, and his ability to create characters that make you wish you could borrow his creativity make him a seriously delicious literary dish. What makes Mike Hundley run? We are going to find out by delving deeper than any interview has ever delved into this author's mind. I present to you the Western author of 2017.

Mike, I loved your book "Gunsight Justice," and I have been excited about interviewing you. It's a real pleasure to have you here today with us at Westerner magazine. Thank you for this.

It's certainly my pleasure. Thank you for asking me.

How are you doing?

I'm pretty doggone good. No complaints at my stage in life. I'm not young anymore, but I'm extremely thankful for my life and my continued good health.

You started writing and you have authored one of the best books I've read in a long time—why did you start?

I expect you'll find that that I'm different from most writers. I never set out to be a writer. I've always have good communication skills, and growing up on the farm we had limited entertainment options, so I loved to read. That process helped bring out some creativity. A good friend inspired me to write this book and it just seemed to happen. I'm not highly educated. I never really wanted to go to college, to be honest. My life has been driven by events, I've let them take me places, and I've always tried to do my best with where they've taken me. I wrote my first book at 74, and I found it quite easy to write.

How did your love affair with books begin?

As a high school student, many books. History, all action-based, the Romans and Vikings, the British Empire, our American Indians (the most beautiful culture), the Civil War. All real and true history books inspired my fiction, created my imagination. Way too many to list, but true history of the world is a big horizon.

So, you are an exceptionally well-read individual. As a reader, how would you rate your own writing style?

I feel the moment with great passion, love my good characters and hate the evil ones. Good prevails, usually after some blood is shed. Readers will see the fights of good vs. evil in my stories. I have been told I write in a poetic style and a very descriptive style that brings characters to life and puts them in real places. Those are nice compliments.

How was the writing process for you?

It's an amazing process. It's almost like having an out of body experience. There's nothing quite like it.

Many writers base their characters on people they know. How did you create your characters?

I have to say that I don't think my characters are intentionally based on anyone. My characters were all original. One of them came to me as I drove home. A few years ago, I wrote some short stories for my wife. A couple of names I came up with back then made it into the book, but the story was purely thought up on the spot.

Do you plan to write and publish more of your stories? Do you enjoy writing?

Inspiration and motivation are two very different things for me. I have started the sequel and I intend to finish it. I plan to write it more carefully. I want to be more thoughtful and make this second book my best one yet. I have outlines that I make

about other types of books, but I haven't followed up on them yet. I have so many other interests that I have to try and fit my writing around the rest of my life.

As good and evil play a large part in your books, do you actively try to teach readers a moral with your stories?

My mama and daddy raised me to be a good boy. I hope Mama sees that it shows in my writing. There is always a hidden and an obvious moral. Readers have to be willing to see it. Then it grabs them by the throat. The fight of good against evil is there in all the pages, and the feelings of those fights carry all the way through the story.

And the story you are talking about is "Gunsight Justice." Your first book, correct? Readers have been buying into your writing style around the world—can you tell us a little about the book?

I certainly can. A defeated Confederate family leaves Virginia and builds a ranch in Colorado only to fight more battles for survival. People are killed, and two young sons take up trails for revenge against long odds, finding bullets are their best friends and deadliest of enemies. A surprising romance blooms on the trail, and the story takes surprising turns from the beginning to the end. And did I mention to the end? Just as the reader is on the right trail, it forks, and another trail emerges leading down into dark timber and steep cliff trails. Danger is always lurking in the story from a series of passions, good vs. evil. Drama and romance is around the next turn, and there's

no way to stop it until the end. And it goes on to the surprising ending—The White Light.

You obviously enjoy the writing process and you have a very individual style of writing. But let me ask you this—if you had to choose a segment of your new book as your favorite, which part would you choose?

More than a part—there are many places where I drifted out of myself writing what the characters felt and saw. It is the element of excitement, of action and death and fulfillment of hearts that drives the story in unexpected directions. It took us all down dangerous trails where we had to fight off enemies and find our way home as I rode with the characters. There are many surprises that just happened to all of us as we all rode along. At times, I felt more like a character than the writer. At night, I unsaddled my horse and cleaned my Colt .44. It's the closest thing to living in the 1880s. I believe readers will feel it, too. It's out of body or mind, pulled back into historical times of settling an unforgiving, savage wild country. Smell the sweat of your horse... Be a pioneer, fight for everything you have every day. I love to impart those feelings, injection molded into the story with no fear of the aftermath.

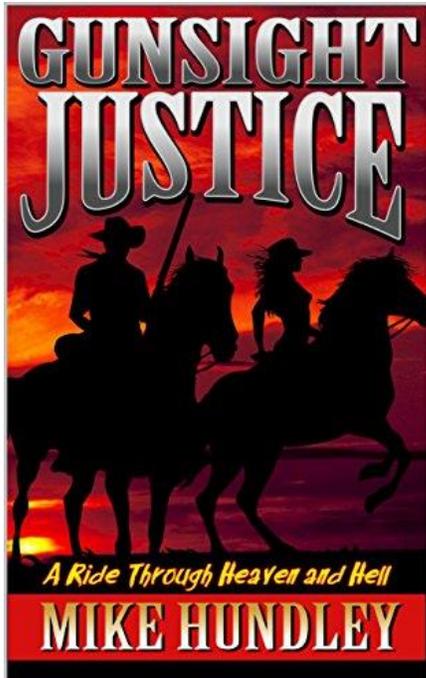
A few months ago, we had a very successful author in this magazine who was asked to name the character he had created with whom he would spend time. He couldn't answer. Can you?

I would like to ride a high, dangerous trail with Ransom and Gabe on a fine, high spirited horse; I would like to hear myself say under my breath, "My life ain't worth a plugged nickle" as I look over into a chasm, holding my reins lightly, talking to my horse and new friends, hoping at the ride's end I have earned their respect. That would be a red-letter day, for sure. Oh, yeah, and then wash some Aleve down with a shot of Patron tequila. WOWEE!!

My favorite thing would be sitting around a big fire with friends who have passed on, all the great men I have hunted, fished and traveled with. All the people I have known, friends and family laughing and singing. It would mean I made it to heaven. Could anything be better than that? No, nothing could ever be better.

WOW! What an answer! I don't think there's a better way to end this interview. Thank you for spending this time with me, Mike.

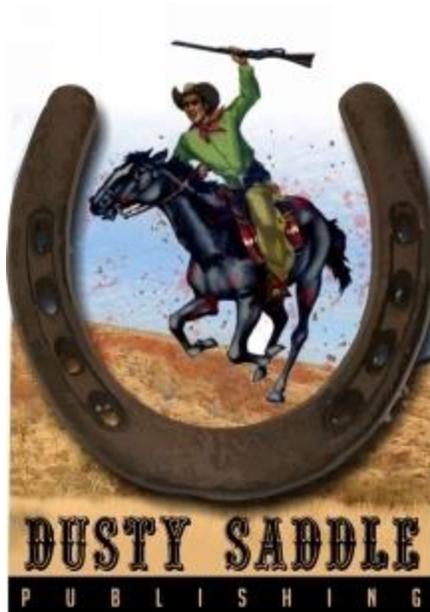
You are very welcome. It's been a pleasure talking to you.



Have you tried the excellent "Gunsight Justice" from Mike Hundley? [Available now from Amazon and only 99 cents!](#) If you love Westerns, you better get used to reading Hundley. He's one of the best, and he's available for purchase now as both a [paperback](#) and [Kindle edition](#).



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



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