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Author Kevin Ellis
photo by Chris Fritchie

Local Authors Bring the World to Frisco

By Jennifer Nelson

WALK INTO THE BOOKWORM on any given day and you'd be greeted with a host of activity. You could join anything from story hour and book signings to events like the Harry Potter Release Party. And, many of these activities focus on what store owner, David Norwood, sees as an important asset the area has to offer – local authors. “Being sort of the little guy myself, I like to help local authors. I know it's hard for those guys.”

Mr. Norwood and his wife, Mickie, opened The Bookworm at Main and Teel just this past August as an extension of their passion. “My wife and I love to

read, so we came up with this idea,” said Mr. Norwood. “But we were initially skeptical.” After discovering consultants who could help them open a new business and learning of a lawsuit against large chain bookstores that benefited independent shops, they “jumped in and went for it.”

One of their goals in helping local authors is to help the community. “I'm also trying to promote a ‘shop local businesses’ idea,” said Mr. Norwood. “With this area growing so fast, the infrastructure is having a hard time keeping up. So if people shop locally and

support local authors, then there will be more revenue going into the area. Really, shopping locally benefits everyone.”

Supporting local authors is extremely easy. With more than 10 book releases by local authors in the last few months, there is something for everyone. *Frisco STYLE* had the opportunity to talk with a few of the many talented writers who have recently published books, including Kevin P. Ellis, Betsy Haynes, D. Goode Morgan and Larry and Barbara Payton.

CRIME FIGHTER TO CRIME WRITER

After 16 years with the Dallas Police Department, Kevin P. Ellis decided it was time for a change. “I just wanted to write,” he explained. “I've wanted to write for some time.” And write he did, using his extensive law enforcement knowledge and a few of his own experiences as the basis for his first novel, “The Rhoberts Brothers.” Set in present day, the two brothers fight crime and eventually run into a radical group attempting to overthrow the government.

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Mr. Ellis says his inspiration came only partially from his police work. “It's not even from things I've seen necessarily,” he said. “I just have a wild imagination.” He also gleans ideas and details from his life and the people around him, including

his sister and four brothers. “I’ll take bits and pieces of our personalities, and I’ll take things that I like about certain ones of us,” said Mr. Ellis. “And, I even have a character that’s based on my partner of 12 years. It makes it easier to think about what they’d do in certain situations.”

While Mr. Ellis says he doesn’t expect to become as well known as Stephen King right away, he does think the book would make an excellent action-packed movie. And he’s impressed by the community’s efforts to help him succeed. His writing keeps him busy, especially with his thoughts turning toward the second and third books in this series. But Mr. Ellis, who lives in Frisco, still finds time to spend with his wife and two children, coach his daughter’s volleyball team and volunteer at his church.

SEASONED WORDS

After writing more than 70 novels, you’d think writing might get a bit monotonous or it would be hard to come up with a topic. But that’s not the case for Betsy Haynes, who recently published “The Dearly Departed,” her 76th juvenile novel. She says she always has a story brewing in her mind, ever since she was in the third grade when she wrote her first book. “After 76 books, it’s hard to say exactly where the idea came from,” she said. “My imagination just works all the time. I like to do humor and I like to do ghost stories.”

One thing that has become harder over time, though, is the publishing process. Mrs. Haynes remembers when she first



Betsy & Jim Haynes

photo by Chris Fritchie

started publishing it was relatively easy. Today, she says it is much harder because there are fewer publishing houses, each with smaller staffs, making it more difficult to get your book in the hands of an editor.

Her husband, Jim, who is also a writer, illustrated the cover for “The Dearly Departed,” depicting this family story about lovable ghosts. And after 47 years of marriage, the Haynes have learned to collaborate extremely well on their projects. “A few years ago, we worked on one book together, and neither one of us believed – and I don’t think anyone else could have told – which parts he wrote and which parts I wrote,” said Mrs. Haynes. “We’re lucky in that department.”

The Haynes currently live in The Colony

and are busy with additional books and projects. Mr. Haynes is working on a paranormal novel about a young man whose contradictory desires battle within him while he makes important decisions. And Mrs. Haynes is finishing up a three-book Christmas series to be published later this year. Together, they are also working with various schools, libraries and bookstores on programs to teach children to write.

WHOLESALE FAMILY FUN

It all began with a stray dog that captured D. Goode Morgan’s heart. “She shed spring, summer, winter, fall – all year long,” said Ms. Morgan about her dog. “I always thought she would go bald sometime,

but she never did. And I was always saying how if I had a penny for every piece of her fur...” After the dog passed away at 16-years-old, Ms. Morgan kept feeling the need to write a story about her dog. So she began to write a short story for Reader’s Digest, although it quickly became too long for that publication. So she continued to write, ending up with “The Furry Fortune,” a fun adventure story about twin brothers and their dog Nuzzles, whose fur turns into money after jumping through a rainbow.

Ms. Morgan wrote the book with ages 9-12 in mind. She also includes her own illustrations at the beginning of every chapter and fun facts at the end of each chapter. “When I was a kid, I was always looking for a way to remember where I was in a book,” she said. “So this way they

can say, "OK. I was at the spare bedroom facts in the book." By doing this, they can have something to remember, if they're visual." She's also tried to keep the book realistic by calling the parents "Mom and Dad" and making the kids do chores before they go outside to play.

I've written for about as long as I could hold a pencil. I love to write romance, because I'm basically a romantic at heart.

The book was published through an online publisher and Ms. Morgan says the company did a great job. But, she adds it's still a difficult process. "It's hard to get published because I don't know anyone in the industry," she said. "It's very difficult; I'm trying every avenue I can think of." She's even sent her book to Laura Bush for her school reading program and to Oprah. And, she has high hopes for the book in the future. "I also think it would make a great movie script because it's an adventure. Or maybe even a great musical," she said. "And, if it turned into a Broadway play, I wouldn't complain! There are a lot of opportunities with it I think, once people fall in love with it."

Ms. Morgan lives in Frisco and plans on writing a sequel to this book, focusing on the twins as adults who have their own kids.

AN ONLINE ROMANCE

Larry and Barbara Payton first met through an online singles website. "There weren't any romantic sparks," he said. "But there were creative sparks. We found out we could talk for hours." They'd email, instant message and make phone calls to discuss thoughts for new books, bouncing ideas off of each other. Eventually they decided to write "The Ballad of Lacey Jay" together. "But in the process of writing the book, we fell in love," said Mr. Payton. "And our love came more out of respect for each other and our appreciation for each other's



photo by Chris Fritchie

abilities and talents."

They married in November 2006 and released the book in March through a print-on-demand publisher, which they believe is the easiest way to get published. "The old paradigm for publishing is archaic," said Mr. Payton. "It takes too long to get something out there, and it's too hard to get something recognized. So we're out there doing it ourselves."

Mrs. Payton originally came up with the basis for the book. "I've written for about as long as I could hold a pencil," she said. "I love to write romance, because I'm basically a romantic at heart." When Mr. Payton came along, they decided to add a bit of murder and mystery to the romance. Now the book includes a villain who is actually likeable because he doesn't realize he's a murderer. He suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which causes him to murder and then block the action from his memory.

The Paytons have a long history of writing. Mrs. Payton was a writer in television advertising for almost 20 years, while Mr. Payton worked in journalism and technical writing before becoming a veteran's counselor, where he gained experienced dealing with PTSD.

The Paytons currently live in Little Elm and are working on a prequel and two sequels for this book. Mr. Payton is writing a group of short stories and an espionage thriller, and they are also considering doing a coffee table book.

All of these books, as well as many others, can be found at The Bookworm. But beware, the experience may entice you to begin the great American novel deep within you.

Jennifer Nelson is a freelance writer living in Frisco.

Here are other new releases by local authors, which can also be found at The Bookworm.

"Coming Out Christian" by Jen Austin – This is an autobiographical look at Dallas radio personality Jen Austin's development both as a Christian and as a lesbian.

"Fight for Your Marriage" by Angela V. Blackston – This book is designed to give the necessary weapons to not just fight, but to have victory in, your marriage.

"12 Steps to Becoming a More Organized Mom" by Lane Powell Jordan – She offers positive, practical tips for busy moms, combined with sympathy, understanding and laughter.

"52 Ways to a Healthy You" by Laura Lewis – Enjoy practical advice for living a healthier life.

"Cinco de Mayo Reckoning" by Terry Money – This is an action-packed novel depicting a modern Mexican military invasion of the American Southwest.

"The Giving Zone" by Bruce Painter – Discover how to give intelligently so acts of giving and receiving will become perpetual, replenishing all who participate with a successful, prosperous and fulfilling life.

"Revenge of Innocents" by Nancy Taylor Rosenberg – A novel about a probation officer who confronts the brutal death of her best friend and the dark mystery that surrounds it.