

Author says research important

Why does a noted author, part-way through a well-received series of novels, delay completion of the series by devoting time to writing other novels?

In Gordon Dickson's case, it's partly financial, partly interest in other subjects.

The Hugo and Nebula award-winning science-fiction author has received critical acclaim for the Childe Cycle (also known as the Dorsai novels).

Yet, Dickson keeps turning out other novels in between novels of his major work.

He devotes so much time to research - each Childe novel takes about two years - that he tries to produce a non-series novel between each Childe tale.

Sitting at a table in a restaurant in a Toronto hotel, the 67-year-old, Edmonton-born author talks about the high costs involved in preparing a Childe Cycle novel and the importance of research.

"Bear in mind," he says, "that the Cycle was only supposed to be nine novels, three historical, three contemporary and three set in the future. Now, we are looking at 13, seven of them set in the future."

Six novels, Dorsai (1967); Necromancer (1960); Soldier, Ask Not (1967); Tactics of Mistake (1971); The Final Encyclopedia (1984) and The Chantry Guild (1988), all from the futuristic segment of the Cycle, have been published. Dickson has also produced several shorter books related to the Cycle, including The Dorsai Companion.

Dickson, whose family moved to the U.S. when he was a youth, hopes to complete the Cycle within 20 years, which would mean he would still be writing Childe novels while in his 80's.

"I come from a long-lived family," he says with a smile.

The author, whose new novel - Wolf and Iron - is his 50th, often stops work on one book to research information for another, when he comes across new information.

"Some writers say all this research is unnecessary. You just sit down and write. But I believe in great investigation of the sociological aspects I am writing about.

Wolf and Iron is a great example. He had planned to spend eight months on it, but devoted 14.

The novel is set at the beginning of a new Dark Age, in a world where technological links and distribution systems - the underpinnings of western civilization - have collapsed. Each community is on its own. The



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strong rule. The weak die.

A young man, trying to cross much of the U.S. to reach safety at his brother's farm, releases a young wolf from its captors. The wolf teaches the man how to survive in savage times.

The interaction between the man and the wolf is based on extensive research.

Dr. Harry Frank, head of the psychology department at the University of Michigan in Flint, helped Dickson with the research.

Frank, who wrote the forward for Wolf and Iron, was impressed by the lengths Dickson went to to learn about wolves.

It is not only a fast-paced adventure novel, said Frank, but a "scientifically supportable portrait of wolf behavior and wolf-human interactions."

Who says that fans of pop music are fickle? Half a century after his debut as orchestra leader at Toronto's Granite Club, pianist Frank Bogart was recently honored by members at a gala gathering in the club. The maestro's 50 years of providing music - for balls, wedding receptions, anniversary parties and dinner dances - at the same club may be a North American record.

Bogart was born in Woodstock, grew up in Galt (now Cambridge) and Hamilton, and adopted the musical style of the late Eddy Duchin, who was foremost among society bandleaders. But Bogart and his musicians have always catered to a wide range of musical tastes - Broadway show tunes, swing, Dixieland, rock and the latest youthful crazes.

During his 50 years as an orchestra leader, Frank Bogart has developed other skills as well: He is a partner in a Toronto Stock Exchange member-firm and a black belt in karate (as was the late Elvis Presley.)

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