

A 'Strange' new chapter for local author

Set in late 1800s Paris, Base's latest novel has plenty of twists and turns

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

In many ways, Ron Base's life has been one big adventure; he has written for major magazines, worked with noted movie directors and lived in foreign countries.

So when it came time for him to put pen to paper — or rather fingers to keyboard — to start his latest novel, it was no surprise he chose to write an adventure full of mystery and fantasy.

His recently-released book, *The Strange*, certainly has plenty of both, serving them up in generous portions to engage imaginations and delight readers.

That is, if he's been successful in his mission, Base said. So far on-line critics have praised *The Strange*, Base's fifth novel, calling it a "page-turner" for all ages, and the local author can only hope the positive response continues.

"I think that's the strength of the book," he said, explaining it's the kind of book that keeps readers riveted until the very end.

It's one Base hopes teens and adults alike will enjoy.

"I want them (my books) to be intelligent and well-written, but there's still a kid in me that likes adventure. I'm a sucker for it."

And there's no art form that unleashes one's imagination the way books do, he said.

The Strange is set against the backdrop of magical, turn-of-the-century Paris in 1889 and follows

the adventures of a troubled, 14-year-old orphan who's out to stop an international confidence woman — and possible witch — from selling the Eiffel Tower.

"It's a cat and mouse game as she tries to pull off the con," Base explained.

The title of the book refers to the power teen character Ned Arnhelm believes he possesses — an ability to levitate objects and peer into the "Other World," a strange place indeed.

It's been a years-long process writing the book, with some parts penned in Montreal and some here in Milton where Base and his wife, Kathy, moved two years ago.

"Milton is a town that for me seems to be conducive to sitting quietly and (writing)," he said.

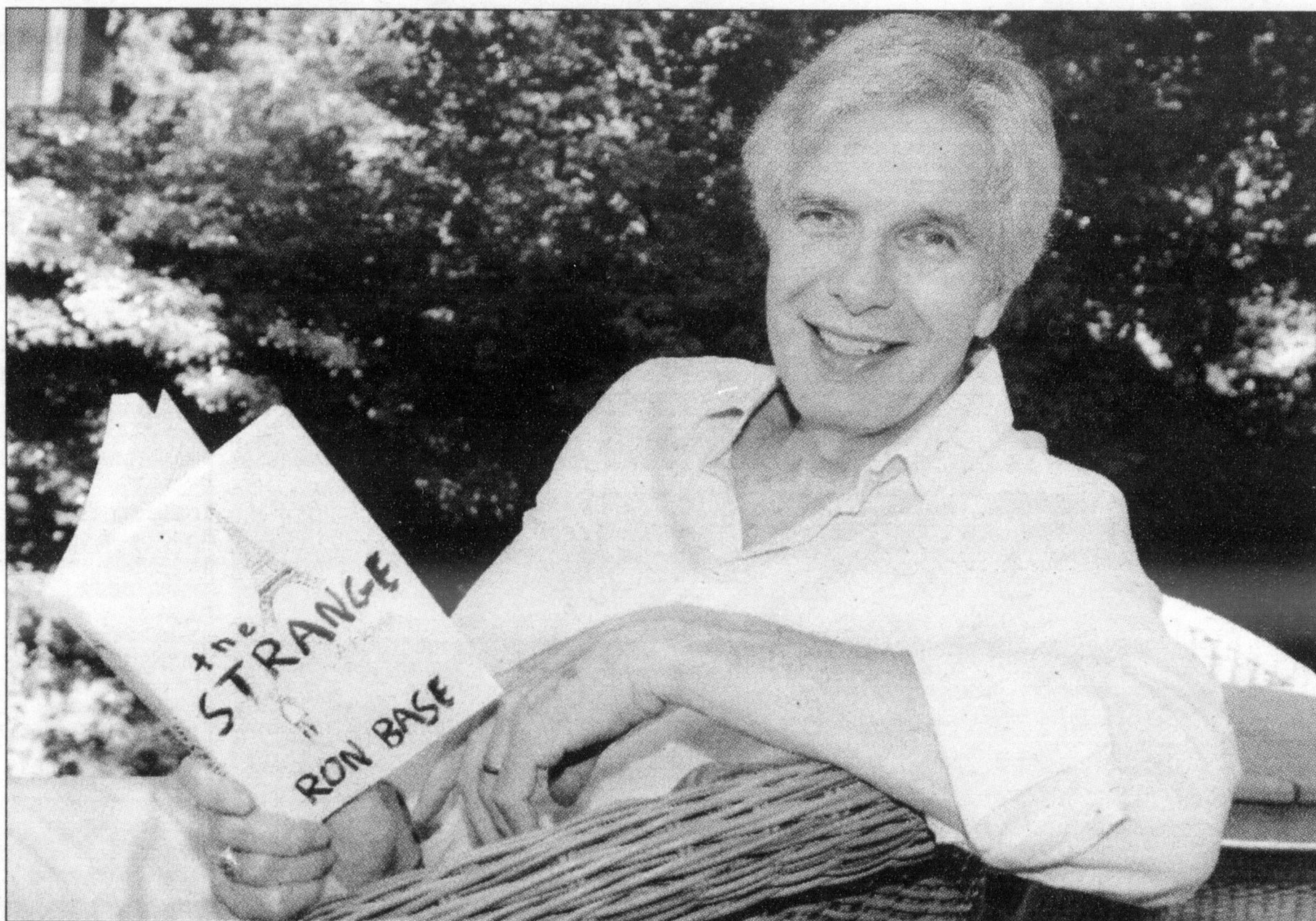
The simple — but never easy — act of persevering is one necessary for any author, Base said, including a seasoned writer like himself. Initial drafts of *The Strange* weren't received well and required plenty of re-writing over a span of years.

"It's been a long, arduous journey writing the book," he said.

However, for someone who wrote to deadline for 25 years, it's nice having the luxury of taking his time. And holding the finished book in his hands makes it worth all the "angst, horror and rejection you've gone through," he said.

Base has been a writer in one form or another since his late teens.

He started out as a reporter with his small-town Ontario newspaper and worked his way up, moving on to



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NOW READ THIS: Miltonian Ron Base relaxes with a copy of his recently-released latest novel, *The Strange*.

bigger papers including almost a decade as the Toronto Star's movie critic.

He's written for magazines ranging from *Cosmopolitan* to the *Washington Post* and has also produced non-fiction works and screenplays, working with directors including Roland Joffe (*The Killing Fields*) and John Boorman (*Deliverance*).

Not one to stay in one place for too long, Base has lived in Los Angeles, Montreal, Paris and Rome.

His frequent trips to Paris aided in his research for *The Strange* and provided the necessary inspiration.

It's difficult for novelists to get their books into stores if their names aren't John Grisham or Dan Brown, Base said. So the Internet has become hugely helpful in providing opportunities smaller authors wouldn't otherwise have.

"In theory, you can take more of your destiny in your own hands as far as your books are concerned," he said, adding his publisher, West-End Books, emphasizes the on-line component.

But that doesn't mean Base avoids personal interaction with his readers — far from it. He recently held a launch party at his Milton home, opening his door to

more than 100 people, and held one in Toronto drawing 150. He also hopes to hold similar launches in Montreal and the U.S.

"I'm tremendously proud of what's been accomplished," Base said, adding he's had a wonderful team of supporters.

Base will give a reading, talk about his book and meet with residents Thursday at Martindale Gardens, 45 Martin St., starting at 2:30 p.m.

The Strange is available at amazon.ca and www.ronbase.com.

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