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Interview with *Monsters of the Midway* author Jeff Rasley

by John Warner & Jeff Rasley
September 24, 2012

Why do you write? Is it something you've always done, or always wanted to do? Or is it something that you started fairly recently?

I started writing poetry as an adolescent and had a few poems published in a fine arts journal. In college I wrote a couple short stories and feature articles for local newspapers and campus publications. In law school and early in my legal practice I wrote several articles for legal publications. While my two boys were playing youth sports, and I was coaching, I wrote a couple articles about coaching youth sports. I had written a few travel articles, and after I went to seminary I became interested in writing about traveling from a spiritual perspective. I also became interested in photography, so for the last ten years I have combined photography with writing about meaningful travel adventures in different cultures. I finally had time to begin writing books after leaving law behind in 2009.

Tell me a little about your books.

I've written three nonfiction books about mountaineering adventures in Nepal. I have developed a special relationship with a little Himalayan village, called Basa, and the three books describe my journey from mountaineering adventurer to "the parent of Basa Village".

Another book is about adventures on islands and meditations about the meaning of "getting away from it all" to a remote and beautiful island. My first novel, *False Prophet*, was inspired by a legal case I handled and is a roman a clef about the legal world of Indianapolis. It's a murder mystery/legal thriller/romance.

My last book, *Monsters of the Midway*, was the most fun to write. It is a combination "truthy" memoir, historical fiction, sports novel, and romance. It was fun to relive playing on what *People Magazine* called "the worst team in college ball." The history is accurate, but, since it is historical fiction, I got to interpret certain events to my own satisfaction and to create a coherent story out of a collection of amazingly hysterical experiences.

Did you try to get a conventional publisher or agent interested before you opted for self-publishing?

I thought I was very lucky to publish my first book the traditional way and the publisher even spent some money on a publicist. But the publisher refused to use the title I had chosen and used one I did not like; issued the book on an “accelerated schedule” six months after it was finished; published with a few typos despite three levels of editing; demanded I engage in time consuming and unproductive promotional events; let the publicist get away with doing nothing except mailing the book to reviewers and libraries; and lost interest in promoting the book when sales did not quickly reach best seller level.

I have since published five direct. The titles are my own choice and the books are published as soon as they are finished. Now, I still find myself engaging in time consuming and unproductive promotional activities and I might have missed some typos. And I sure wish someone would pay me an advance. But, the gain in control and responsibility is worth the sacrifice.

My wife, Alicia Rasley, has published twice as many books as I have. We have become so jazzed about the process of direct publishing we started our own indie publishing company to help others through the process of direct publishing. It’s called Knowledge Capture Publishing & Editing.

How have you marketed your books?

I am still experimenting and learning. I give programs, talks and slide shows to civic groups, churches and nonprofits about Himalayan mountaineering and a philanthropic foundation I lead, the Basa Village Foundation. The personal connection of hearing me talk and seeing my photos creates a meaningful point of contact with potential readers. My wife, on the other hand, has found success through an aggressive social media campaign.

Have you signed up for KDP Select?

I have put all my direct-published books into KDP Select. Sales with B&N and Smashwords were very disappointing, so I decided the exclusivity clause was not giving up real value. And there have been as many borrows as there were sales with the other distributors. For low-priced direct-published books, the royalty for a borrow on KDP Select is about the same as the royalty for a sale.

What’s next? Are you working on anything at the moment? Do you have anything new coming out in 2012?

As *Monsters* was just published recently, I’m taking a break from book writing. I’ve written a few blogs and I’m helping to edit my wife’s next book, which is a contemporary women’s fiction and romance. And I’ve been spending time helping to establish our new company. But, I do have the start of a sequel to *False Prophet*.