



Hillsboro Argus

Fantasy A local writer hits the big time with the first book in a fantasy/adventure trilogy

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The Argus

Eldon Thompson's bumper sticker might read: "I'd rather be writing."

The 31-year-old first-time novelist much prefers 12-hour days at the keyboard to talking up his new book with reporters or reading to would-be book buyers.

"Writing is what I really want to do," said Thompson, who graduated as valedictorian at Gaston High School a few years ago. "I don't want to sit on a stage and talk about myself."

Thompson has spent a third of his life following his writer's dream -- a dream that took hold when he was just 9 years old.

While earning a degree in English, studying screen writing in Los Angeles and attending the Maui Writers Conference, Thompson has written. Much of what he has written has ended up tucked into drawers, waiting for the moment when a re-write might just make a piece salable.

But the first book in a trilogy of one of Thompson's stories, the "Legend of Asahiel," recently has been published by EOS, an imprint of Harper Collins.

Thompson describes his book as a coming-of-age fantasy/adventure story centered on a young man whose destiny is to save the world by retrieving a lost artifact.

"It's an encouraging tale," Thompson said.

For Thompson, persistence has paid off in the writing world. He dusted off an old manuscript and then followed the suggestions from top fantasy writers like Terry Brooks ("He's my idol," Thompson says) at the Maui conference and wrote and re-wrote before submitting the book to an agent who then sold the book to Harper Collins.

Now, the writer is traveling around the country attending writer and book conferences where he is getting plenty of attention for his debut novel. He flits back-and-forth across the country and will appear in Scotland in August.

Thompson's life as a writer is far different from his growing up years in Gaston. The second of five sons of Dagne Thompson who still lives in Gaston and Tim Sturdivant, who now lives in Utah, Thompson studied hard, played football and considered a career in dentistry before deciding to follow his writing dream.

"I believe that people should have a passion for what they do and I was considering dentistry for all the

wrong reasons," he said.

Instead, he writes. It's his passion.

Thompson writes in long stretches each day, breaks for lunch, a run and some weight lifting, and then settles back to his writing. He works from extensive outlines he crafts before he ever types a single word.

The first book in the trilogy, "The Crimson Sword," came off the press in May and the final two will appear in May of 2006 and May of 2007. Thompson figures he will have played out the story and its characters in the three books and is already thinking about the stories which will follow.

"I won't run out of ideas for stories," he said.

Readers who love fantasy "really love it," said Thompson and those who don't like it, "really don't like it." He's not out to convert anyone, but is happy that his work is being positively received by fantasy lovers.

These days, Thompson divides his time between Washington County and Los Angeles. His long-time girlfriend, Crystal Olinger, sets up interviews and appearances for him, although she herself is not a fantasy fan. "She's just reading the book now," he said.

Thompson has delivered copies of his book to some of his former teachers and still gets a thrill when he sees the book on the shelf in major bookstores. He also credits Forest Grove dentist Vaughn Tidwell, a long-time family friend, with both encouraging him to consider dentistry and to follow his own dreams.

For additional information about "The Crimson Sword," go to www.eldonthompson.com.

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