

## About the Author

I was born in South Carolina in 1945. Since 1978 I've been living in Michigan and teaching at a small college here. I hold several academic degrees: an M. A. from Duke, an M. Div. from Southeastern Seminary, and a Ph. D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My wife is a psychologist. We have four children, two sons and two daughters, of whom we're very proud, and a grandson whom we absolutely adore. In addition to teaching and writing, I enjoy working in my yard and collecting baseball cards.

I've loved writing since I was in high school. My first article was published in 1972. I consider myself more of a story-teller than a literary artist. When I read a book I'm more interested in one with a plot that keeps moving rather than long descriptive passages or philosophical reflection. They say, "Write what you like to read," so I try to write books that I would enjoy reading.

You'll notice from the buttons that I have books in several categories. I teach about the ancient world, especially Rome, so it's not surprising that I've written about that era, both in fiction and non-fiction. I'm pleased that Exploring the New Testament World has been used in a number of college and university classes. My other great passion is mystery novels. My first, Kill Her Again, is the first in a proposed series. So are All Roads Lead to Murder: A Case from the Notebooks of Pliny the Younger and Death Goes Dutch: A Wooden Shoe Mystery. But, as my editor likes to say, "It's not a series until there's a second book." I have second books in all three series in progress. You can read the first chapter of The Blood of Caesar: A Second Case from the Notebooks of Pliny the Younger on this site.

Some people like to know what type of mystery novel they're being offered, like my children who used to sniff suspiciously at a new dish. Mine fall in the amateur sleuth category, and in the subcategories of romantic and academic mysteries. The rules of writing a mystery aren't hard-and-fast, of course, but in 1928 S. S. Van Dine (a pseudonym for Willard Huntington Wright) set out "Twenty rules for writing detective stories." You can see the entire list at <http://www.mtroyal.ab.ca/gaslight/vandine.htm>. I find myself in agreement with most of Van Dine's rules. For example, "There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel," he said, "and the deader the corpse the better." He didn't much care for mysteries that take on literary airs: "A detective novel should contain no long descriptive passages, no literary dallying with side-issues, no subtly worked-out character analyses, no 'atmospheric' preoccupations." The classic mysteries of the Golden Age certainly follow his prescription; some modern mystery novelists have departed from it. In fact, one of the most common descriptions/complaints about modern mysteries is that they are "character-driven."

I disagree with Van Dine on a point or two. "There must be no love interest," he decreed. "The business in hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the altar." I happen to enjoy mysteries in which a man and a woman find themselves drawn together as they solve a crime, so in most of my books there is a relationship developing as well as crime to unravel. The trick is to balance the mystery aspect with the development of the relationship.

When my children were young I read to them a lot and developed some ideas for stories of my own. If you click on the "Children's" button you'll find a sample of my work in that area, an historical mystery novel for ages 9-11, called The Secret of the Lonely Grave, which you can order. I have another children's book in the works. (Darn that pesky day job!)

Well, that's a little about me. For a shy person it's difficult to talk so much about myself. I hope you'll browse through the book descriptions and find something that interests you. And let me know what you think of them.