

From Novel Journey

Friday, April 03, 2009

Author Jim LePore ~ Interviewed

What is your current project? Tell us about it.

A World I Never Made is a novel about an American man, Pat Nolan, a widower, who is told that his daughter, Megan, an expatriate writer, has committed suicide in Paris and that he is needed to identify the body. When he arrives at the morgue and is shown the corpse, he sees immediately that it is not Megan. The suicide note, however, is in her hand, and the body he is shown is that of a young woman of the same age, size and general coloring as his daughter. Pat realizes that the brilliant but abrasive Megan has staged her suicide and that she must be in serious trouble to do such a thing. With the help of a beautiful but troubled French detective named Catherine Laurence, Pat sets out to find her. He soon learns that the French police, along with a murky Saudi-based terrorist group, are also hunting her, and that

her life and perhaps the lives of many innocent people, are at stake. Alternating with this story is the story, starting a year earlier, of Megan Nolan, of the events that ultimately lead her to her act of desperation in Paris a year later. The stories come together when the paths of the hunters and the hunted intersect in a forest in the Czech Republic.

Tell us about your journey to publication. How long had you been writing before you got the call you had a contract, how you heard and what went through your head?

I left my law practice in 1999 to write full time. In 2008 I entered A World I Never Made in a breakthrough novel contest run by amazon.com. It did not win but it drew some attention, which resulted in my contract with The Story Plant. I have been alternately elated and nervous ever since, but one thing remains constant: it is a dream come true.

Do you still experience self-doubts regarding your work, or struggle in a particular area such as writers block or

**angst driven head-banging against walls?
Please share some helpful overcoming
hints that you've discovered.**

I think self-doubt is a good thing. It keeps me pressing to make what I write as honest and from-the heart as possible.

**What mistakes have you made while
seeking publication? Or to narrow it down
further what's something you wish you'd
known earlier that might have saved you
some time/frustration in the publishing
business?**

I don't think there are any mistakes. You go down every path. You learn to deal with rejection. If I had not gotten lucky, my next step would have been to self-publish. I think Thornton Wilder was right when he said that life's richest gifts flow from frustration and cruelty and separation.

**What's the best or worst advice (or both)
you've heard on writing/publication?**

The best advice I ever received on writing is contained in the following quote from Isaac Babel: "Your language becomes clear and strong not when you can no longer add but when you can no longer take away."

What is your favorite source for finding story ideas?

The human heart.

Have you ever had one of those awkward writer moments you'd like to share with us, the ones wherein you get "the look" from the normals? Example, you stand at a knife display at the sporting goods store and ask the clerk which would be the best to use to disembowel a six foot man...please do tell.

This has not happened to me yet.

Is there a particularly difficult set back that you've gone through in your writing career you are willing to share? Or have you ever been at the point where

considered quitting writing altogether?

Rejection is painful, but my wife tells me that if I quit writing she'll be very mad at me, so I never think of stopping.

With the clarity of experience what advice would you offer up to the wet-behind-the-ears you if beginning this writing journey today?

I would try to make myself understand as early as possible that everything happens for a reason.

What event/person has most changed you as a writer? How?

Meeting my editor (and now good friend) Lou Aronica. He never lets me take the easy road or put my head in the sand.

What piece of writing have you done that you're particularly proud of and why?

I have written two other novels besides A World

I Never Made. These have not yet been published but I hope some day they are. I am proud of all three. Perhaps, however, I am most proud of the short stories I wrote at the request of my publisher. They each have to do with a character in A World I Never Made. They came right from my heart and I believe that they validated just how real and honestly alive these characters had become for me.

Do you have a pet peeve having to do with this biz?

Not now.

Do you have a dream for the future of your writing, something you would love to accomplish?

I would like as many people as possible to find real pleasure and enjoyment in reading my books.

What is your favorite and least favorite part of being a writer?

My favorite part is sitting down and writing every day. My least favorite part is the nervousness about how well I'm doing and where I'm going, although as I said earlier this is probably a good thing.

How has your unique life journey prepared you to be an author? What is one of the more unique or strange life experiences that has really given you an extra oomph in your writing?

I'm not sure how to answer this without seeming flippant or disrespectful to people who may be interested in the response. Everyone's life journey is unique, but how exactly that uniqueness lends itself to writing, I don't know. It has something to do with listening to your heart and not your head, but even that might be saying too much.

Describe your special or favorite writing spot or send a picture if you'd like.

I write in a small office in my house with a view of woods and the kitchen handy.

What aspect of writing was the most difficult for you to grasp/conquer? How did you overcome it?

Show, don't tell is not as easy to do as it sounds. You have to work at it.

What is the first thing you do when you begin a new book?

This will sound crazy, but I come up with the name of the lead character.

Writing rituals. Do you have to sit somewhere specific, complete a certain number of words, leave something undone to trigger creativity for the next session? Some other quirk you'd like to share?

I write four-to-six hours a day. I re-write as I go. Sometimes I think I do this too much. Then the next day I review what I wrote the day before and often do more revising. It has to sound right--and advance the plot--before I can move on.

Plot, seat of pants or combination?

I lay the plot out and then tweak it as I go.

What is the most difficult part of pulling together a book? Ex. Do you have saggy middles, soggy characters, soupy plots during your first drafts...if so, how do you shape it up?

I try, with Lou's help, to pull the book together as I go. I don't want to have to shape it up at the end. That seems almost impossible to me.

Have you received a particularly memorable reader response? Please share.

I have had some positive reviews, which I believe are on the book's website.

Have you had a particularly memorable peer honor? Please share.

I consider the blurbs I've received to be peer honors.

**How much marketing/publicity do you do?
Any advice in this area?**

I do whatever my publisher tells me to do, and I try my best to do it well.

**Parting words? Anything you wish we
would've asked because you've got the
perfect answer?**

No, except to say thank you. This has been fun.