

Interview with Douglas B. Carlyle

Book: In Search of the Fuller Brush Man

By Margo L. Dill

When fictional character Sean Marcum's mother writes "Fuller Brush Man" in her journal before she dies, he is on a quest to discover the message behind her words. This is the interesting premise of University of Illinois graduate Douglas B. Carlyle's novel, "In Search of the Fuller Brush Man."

Carlyle got the idea for the book from his own life. His mother died of pancreatic cancer in 1987, and the last words she wrote in her journal were "Fuller Brush Man."

For people who aren't familiar with the Fuller Brush Company, Alfred C. Fuller began this company in 1906, selling custom-made brushes. They have three basic rules, "Make it work," "make it last," and "guarantee it no matter what." In the novel, Sean becomes obsessed with figuring out his mother's riddle and why she would have referred to the Fuller Brush Company as part of her last message to him.

Sean's high school sweetheart, Kim, also loved riddles. Although they married different people 30 years ago, Kim sends Sean a memoir, "The Road to Monticello," before dying of breast cancer. The book, Kim's memoir about her failed relationship with Sean, contains the secret to a long and loving relationship—something Sean longs for. According to Carlyle, the title of Kim's memoir is a metaphor for finding true happiness. Sean's own marriage hasn't always been so blissful. The novel follows Sean as he attempts to unravel these mysteries and find happiness in his life.

"Relationships aren't always pure bliss," Carlyle said about the overall theme in his book. "Too often today, we see couples abandoning what they have. . .for what they think will be better. . .The central characters in this novel face this dilemma head-on."

Since Carlyle grew up in Urbana and graduated from Urbana High School in 1973, much of the action in the novel takes place in the area. "Many scenes in the novel take place at Carle Park in Urbana and Allerton Park in Monticello or around the U of I campus. . .I was always very fond of Allerton and Monticello, and I visited there frequently."

After Carlyle wrote "In Search of the Fuller Brush Man" in 2009 and 2010, he entered it into the 2010 Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award Contest and placed as a quarterfinalist. This success assured him that he had a good book. Instead of going the traditional publishing route, he decided to publish through Amazon's subsidiary company, Createspace.

"Being an engineer, I truly enjoyed having complete control over the creation of my book," Carlyle said. Readers can purchase "In Search of Fuller Brush Man" at Jane Addams Book Shop in Champaign and WackyNackies Gifts and Café in Monticello or online from Amazon or Createspace.

Carlyle currently lives on a ranch near the small town of Utopia, Texas. Besides being a writer, he works full time as a paramedic. He said that sometimes his job as a paramedic is difficult, especially when he loses a patient. "Writing lets me leave that reality for the reality I create within my novels."

He is also working on two more books—"Vinegarone" and "Boundaries." He plans to have these ready for holiday sales in 2011 and 2012, respectively. The author maintains a website (<http://dbcarlyle.com>), where he includes a synopsis of each book and biographical information.

Carlyle realizes the road to success as an author is not easy. "I may not sell a million copies, but I'm having a lot of fun."

Margo Dill has a degree in English from Truman State University and often reviews books as a columnist for "WOW! Women On Writing" e-zine and her blog, "Margo Dill's Read These Books and Use Them." (<http://margodill.com/blog/>) She lives in St. Louis with her family.