

A WRITTEN ROUNDUP

Alfred Dennis writes every day. “If I’m not working with cows or hunting, I’m writing,” he says. The retired Fort Worth, TX Branch 226 member was raised in Oklahoma and discovered a love for storytelling early on. “I had a talent for writing poems,” he said, adding, “People said I had a wild imagination.”

Before starting his career in the Postal Service, the carrier served in the Army from 1962 to 1968. During that time, he served in Okinawa, Japan, as well as in South Korea as part of a K-9 Corps, and would take trained dogs to various military posts.

“We’d pull night guard and patrolled,” he said. “In my off shift, I’d write instead of sleep.”

Dennis says he wrote 20 novels during his military service. He was all set to bring them back to the United States with him, but he was told he had too many bags, so he decided to send a suitcase home separately with the novels in them.

They never made it back.

“I lost some really good stuff,” he said. “When you’re young, you write better.”

That setback hasn’t stopped him, though.

After returning to this country in 1968, Dennis tried to decide what he wanted to do with his life; the Army wanted to send him back to Korea, but he did not want to leave his children again.

So he decided to take the postal exam and was hired as a letter carrier. From 1968 to 1993, he delivered mail in Fort Worth.

“I loved letter-carrying,” Dennis said. “We hit that mailbox at the same time every day. Those were the days.”

While employed by the Post Office, he also was breaking horses and running a horseshoeing business. He would write at night, he says. Dennis adds that raising five kids with his wife kept him busy.

It wasn’t until after retirement from his 25-year postal career that he pursued publishing any of his works. Dennis has mostly produced Westerns, some of which are also classified as Native American fiction, historical fiction, action/adventure and Western romance. In addition to the fiction, one book, *Rover*, is a true story, and he’s also written numerous poems. Three of his poems were published in an anthology of various poets. Dennis has put out a total of 18 books.

“My books are frontier Westerns, like in the days of Daniel Boone, from the 1850s back,” he said. “They’re about mountain men, Indians.”

Dennis says that his books are historical novels, and he has researched a lot about the era to make sure his books are as historically accurate as possible. “I am a storyteller first, not a honed writer,” he said.

And, despite the fact that he occasionally hears criticism that there’s too much romance in some of his books, he insists that they are suitable for any age Western novel reader.

“They’re clean—no necking,” he said.

The carrier names James Fenimore Cooper (best known for *The Last of the Mohicans*) and Zane Grey, a Western novelist who idealized the American frontier, as his favorite authors. He compares his own writing to Western fiction author Louis L’Amour.

Dennis generally aims to write 3,000 to 5,000 words per day on his novels. At that pace, he usually publishes two books per year through Walnut Creek Publishing, and has two slated for 2019. He’s also been working on some short stories.

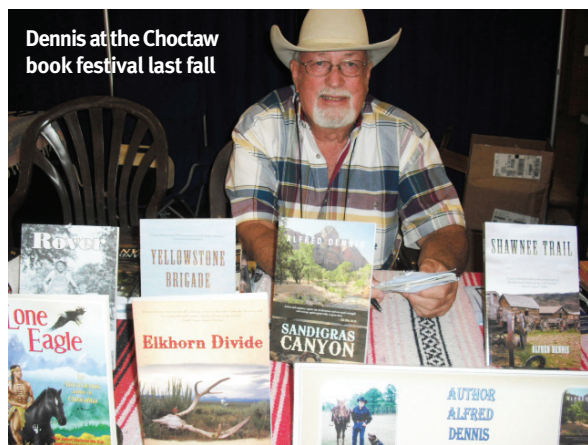
Ideas for his novels usually come to him naturally. “When I need a new book, I start thinking about it,” Dennis said.

And he has a strategy: “I’ll put a name to a book, and then let the name tell me how the book’s going to go,” he says.

A few of Dennis’s most recent books are part of a popular collection of novels called the “Crow Killer” series. “I named it that, [though] my agent said it wasn’t politically correct,” he explained.

He generally can see where the plot is going. He also makes a concerted effort to prevent his stories from sounding too similar. Dennis says he will definitely hear from readers if he fails on that score. Sometimes the carrier has friends read his drafts and solicits their honest opinions.

He doesn’t normally get writer’s block while working on a novel, but on the rare occasion it strikes, he says, “I just put it down and pick it up the next day.”



One novel, *Chiricahua*, was optioned for a movie by two filmmakers. Dennis says it was all lined up with actors, a script and potential sets in Nevada and Utah, but the project currently is stalled for reasons unknown to him, though the filmmakers told the carrier they still want to make it a reality.

Dennis draws inspiration from his upbringing and rural surroundings in the Kiamichi Mountains of southeastern Oklahoma, where he moved back to shortly after his retirement. “All my life, I’ve [been on] a farm surrounded by cowboys,” he said. “We’d sit around the campfire and they’d tell me stories.

“When you’re young, you listen and let them tell their stories,” he added. “They were pretty rough boys.”

Dennis has been around horses his whole life. “I rodeo’d a lot,” he said, adding that his wife used to be a professional barrel racer.

Describing his current life, he says, “I run my dogs, work my cows and write.”

He said he doesn’t think any of his former letter carrier co-workers in Fort Worth know about his career as a novelist, since his novels were published after he had retired from USPS and moved back to Oklahoma. He has formed friendly relationships with his current rural carriers in Oklahoma. “They’re all a good bunch of people,” he said, adding that some of the carriers have read his books.

His novels, available at most major booksellers, sell relatively well and have garnered high praise from readers on Amazon and local reviews in newspapers.

“I [was] not a Western fan on any level until I read *Lone Eagle*,” said one Amazon reader. I find myself want-

ing to be there, live there, talk to chiefs and mighty warriors and feel the thrill of a hunt or the joy of a good meal and wonderful stories.”

Wrote another Amazon reader about *Chiricahua*: “This is about acceptance in a people and cultures. There are many surprises in this book. Just when I feel I know exactly where it is headed, there is a surprise or twist or something very unexpected happens which makes me want to continue reading to see how it turns out. Love the author’s style and how he develops the characters as well as the plot. A very good book and I think a must-read for anyone.”

In a review of *Chiricahua*, a newspaper, *Clayton Today*, wrote, “Mr. Dennis has superbly captured the essence of the turn-of-the-century Southwest territory, its native people, and those on both sides of the law who made that untamed land their home. His characters come alive and keep you turning the pages.”

The carrier promotes his books by attending book fairs—the Choctaw book festival in Oklahoma is the largest—and other local arts and crafts fairs and book signings.

Dennis is modest about the reaction to his works. “People seem to like them,” he says. **PR**

To learn more about Dennis’s writing, visit alfreddennis.com.



Top: The carrier with his horse, Twiggy, and his dog, Bones
Below: A few of Dennis’s novels

