

## Alfred Author Q&A

*Q: What is the significance of the title?*

Scott and I did a lot of brainstorming, and we came up with several titles. One fact kept coming back to me: The Appalachian Mountains are around 480 million years old. They are older than Saturn's rings. It's impossible to know how much blood has been spilled in these mountains.

*Q: Where did the idea from the book come from?*

A: That's a better question for Scott. He had written a rough draft with stories that had caught his eye for one reason or another. He showed it to me, and I suggested we work together to finish it.

*Q: How would you describe working with your coauthor?*

A: He's a policeman, and I'm an editor. I saw it as a cop buddy movie, a cross between Starsky & Hutch and Turner & Hooch. Seriously, we have different writing styles, so we comprised in places, and you'll find both styles throughout the book. He was incredibly tolerant of my compulsive research and constant rewriting.

*Q: What experiences did you bring to the book, and how did they help shape it?*

A: I've been a technical editor for the last five years. Before that, I worked in the trade press as an editor and reporter covering the furniture and textile industries. I learned the value of writing a good, evocative introduction. Plus, I've made almost every possible grammatical and spelling mistake. It's good get to that out of the way.

*Q: What was the biggest surprise you had working on the book?*

A: There were more family connections than I would have thought. For example, in the Nancy Franklin chapter, her sons were in the 2nd Regiment, Company E, North Carolina Mounted Infantry (Union). My great great uncle, Alfred Lemuel Dockery, was a sergeant in Company C of the same regiment. In researching the Old Money Murder chapter, I came across a photo of Sheriff Guy English with the Duckett cousins. Sheriff English was the man who took my grandpa, Berry Dockery, back to Central Prison to serve out the remaining 22 years of his 30-year sentence when grandpa's parole was revoked because of a justifiable homicide.

*Q: What was the most challenging chapter to write?*

A: Without a doubt, it was the Unconquerable Nancy Franklin. Between the two of us, we wrote the chapter four times before we were happy with it. The chapter revolves around the Shelton Laurel Massacre. It had to be carefully and thoughtfully done.

*Q: What was the most straightforward chapter to write?*

A: The chapter about the Biltmore book thefts was probably the easiest to write. That chapter and the freighthopping chapter were lighter than the others, which gave the book some balance.

*Q: Does the book have a theme or themes?*

A: Again, that might be a better question for Scott. I see the theme as a struggle for justice with imperfect people on both sides of the law. The book is about the people, both the victims and the criminals. A lot of it is how things have changed and not changed. And part of what makes the stories compelling is the twists and turns between the crime, the trial, and the sentence.

*Q: How did you research the book?*

A: We used newspaper articles, court transcripts, census and marriage records, death certificates, basically whatever we could find to document as much as possible. Luckily, most of this can now be done online. We got records from the North Carolina and South Carolina archives. Some of the early records were handwritten, and deciphering them was quite a challenge in places.

*Q: Where do the stories take place?*

The stories take place in several states, including Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Several cities are prominent in the book. Of course, Asheville is the hub for some of the chapters. Other notable towns include Maggie Valley, Morganton, Waynesville, and Wilmington, NC; Charleston, Anderson, Pickens, Sumter, and St. Matthews, SC; Knoxville, Jonesborough, and Benton, TN; Danville, VA; and Central Station and Martinsburg, WV.