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## Bell discusses latest book, the writing life

By WES SWIETEK [wswietek@bgdailynews.com](mailto:wswietek@bgdailynews.com) Jun 23, 2018

David Bell's 10th novel, "Somebody's Daughter," will be released July 10.

Submitted

As a child growing up in Cincinnati, author David Bell thought all writers were like Ernest Hemingway, leading adventurous lives in exotic locales. The truth is that many, when not writing, "are driving their kids to soccer practice in a Toyota Camry," Bell said.

For the record, Bell – a best-selling author and Western Kentucky University associate professor – arrived for an interview at Spencer's Coffee on Monday in an orange, 1975 Chevy C-10 pickup without radio or air conditioning.

As he sipped some iced tea on a 90-degree day, Bell spoke about his new book and the writing life.

Bell had two books published by small publishers before "Cemetery Girl" was released in 2011 by New American Library.

The book was a Publishers Weekly bestseller and critically acclaimed – Suspense Magazine has called Bell "one of the brightest and best crime fiction writers of our time" – gaining Bell a national following. That success, he said, was not a total surprise.

“For anyone to succeed at anything, you have to be a little ambitious,” he said, adding that his primary goal was simple: “If you gave me truth serum, I’d say that I just wanted to keep publishing.”

And publish he has, on a regular basis. His new book, “Somebody’s Daughter,” is his 10th novel and will be released July 10.

Bell said many people have misconceptions about the life of a writer.

The popular notions of published authors fall “on either end of the spectrum,” he said. Some people think all writers are destitute, others think they are rich and famous.

“The truth is really somewhere in the middle,” he said.

Bell noted that most writers have a day job; his is as an associate professor of English at WKU, where he also directs the MFA program in creative writing.

Bell notes that part of the job description for academics is to have their work published – either in academic journals or in his case, popular works of fiction.

“It’s part of my job,” he said.

But because writing is only part of his job, he has to be disciplined to produce roughly a novel per year since “Cemetery Girl.”

“The joke I make is I don’t have any children, pets or friends,” he said.

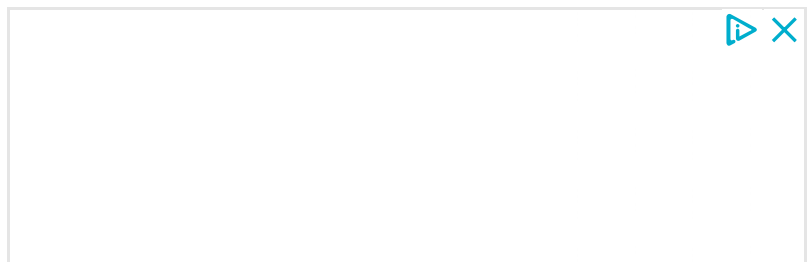
The truth is that having summers off is a key. Bell said he uses the summer WKU break to try to write about 1,000 words a day. A novel is about 90,000 words, so he typically can write an entire novel in a summer.

He first comes up with the idea and then does a detailed outline “as a roadmap,” although he said he does stray at times.

“Several times the ending has changed ... there is that freedom,” he said.

His latest novel, “Somebody’s Daughter,” takes place in one 12-hour period.

Publisher Berkley Hardcover offered the following synopsis of the novel: “When Michael Frazier’s ex-wife, Erica, unexpectedly shows up on his doorstep in a frenzy, she drops a bombshell that threatens to rip everything in his life apart: her 10-year-old daughter Felicity is missing – and Michael is the father. Unsure whether this is the truth but unable to stand by and do nothing, Michael follows the elusive trail of a child he has always wanted but never knew he had.”



Many of Bell’s books share a theme of a family mystery revolving around a missing child. That’s because, Bell said, “disappearances are creepier than murders” because they are open-ended. “To me that’s always been the scariest, creepiest thing.”

“Family is also a universal thing. ... We all have a past and secrets, and the past is always there,” he said.

Looking to the future, Bell also shared some thoughts on where book publishing is headed as an industry.

While many observers in recent years predicted the death of traditional publishing as readership dwindles and with the emergence of e-books, Bell predicts it “will always be around, but will continually be evolving.”

He does envision fewer massive bookstores as e-books continue to grow in popularity, but bound books are “too much a part of our culture” to disappear, he said.

More near-term, he has already submitted his next book, set to come out in 2019, to his publisher. There is no title yet, but Bell revealed it’s about a man who has an encounter with a woman at an airport. After she leaves, he discovers she was not who she said she was.

Even more near-term, Bell will speak at the Bob Kirby branch of the Warren County Library at 6 p.m. July 10.

The speaking engagement is part of a national tour to promote his book – an activity Bell said he enjoys for the chance to engage his fans and the general public – “Writing is an isolated, solitary business,” he said.

*– Free tickets to Bell’s library appearance are available through the library events website: [www.warrenpl.org/events](http://www.warrenpl.org/events).*

*– Bell’s website is at [www.davidbellnovels.com](http://www.davidbellnovels.com).*

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## **Wes Swietek**

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