

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Where were you born and raised?

I was born in N.E. PA on a farm near Idetown--not far from Harvey's Lake, the largest natural lake in the state—and brought up in the same general area.

2. When did you first start to write and why?

I began to write stories in English class in grade school, but never took it seriously. At Wyoming Seminary (prep. school) I wrote articles for the yearbook, and then at Mercersburg Academy I wrote several short stories and produced a notable tape that served to elect one of the class officers. It all seemed like good fun.

3. What's your present age?

I'll be 74 in June, but feel much younger.

4. What gave you the idea to write a book about truckers?

I pulled up alongside a big truck on my way home from having my first novel rejected by a string of New York publishers and guessed there had to be some kind of untold story out there regarding the trucking industry. An old 40's trucking film entitled "They Drive By Night" had been rolling around in my memory.

5. Your writing seems to be centered on your various occupations, so is 3 Aces based strictly on personal experiences?

Well, some of it is. But most of it is drawn from what I've observed taking place around me.

6. Are you a veteran?

No. I got as far as my physical for Navy pilot training but found a childhood accident put me out of the running—for any branch of the armed services—my dream of flying busted.

7. Why did you end up self-publishing this book; and, so far, what has it cost you to do it?

Publishers told me to find an agent, but forty-six New York agents refused to examine my 3 Aces manuscript. One New York editor told me I'd never sell the book because there WERE no other trucking novels—which, to me, seemed totally counterintuitive.

Cover design, professional editing, and book design have run about ten grand. I might have pinched pennies, but wanted to hire the best people I could find. My web site and promo team will necessarily increase those production costs,

8. Why do you want people to read 3 Aces?

I want readers to learn about the hidden world out there that sustains them—that they've seldom, if ever, given a thought to. And I want people to have a better understanding of the emotional costs of these wars we so casually plunge into.

9. How did you travel a path from Williams College to Wall Street, then Atlantic City, and finally on to truck driving?

I left Williams for New York City at the end of my Sophomore year to study acting with Stella Adler. (I'd gotten hooked on drama at Williams—while at the same time publishing *The Purple Cow* humor magazine—so it didn't leave much time for my studies.) My professional acting career rose, sputtered, and flopped. A college friend steered me to a job with a Wall Street firm. Then circumstances at home drew me back to the family business. After treading water for 15 long years, I finally sold my interest and went to Atlantic City—to scope out the world of big-time gambling. For two exhausting years I became part of it, and left to write about the entire experience—the unsold novel still on my shelf. Trucking simply fell into line as the next adventure.

10. How much time do you devote to writing?

I don't keep records, but anywhere from half to all my waking hours... I'm an avid investor in natural resource stocks, and that takes time too. If anything is sacrificed, it's sleep.

11. How much difficulty did you have conceiving the plot of *3 Aces*, and how many revisions did you make since that first draft?

I wrote *3 Aces* slowly, the story just floating out of memories I'd stored while at the wheel. I suppose I've rewritten every page of *3 Aces* 17 to 20 times. But any time I tried to inject some new direction into the story, it would drift right back to my very first thoughts. There WASN'T a first draft. I tackled it one chapter after another, in succession--revising that chapter until it was solid in itself--before going on to the next. Kind of weird, the way it began to hit the page without a storyboard struggle. I didn't meet the ending until it arrived. The story had been in search of ME....

12. How did you keep from writing the heart out of the story during such a lengthy revision process?

I think just being aware that you can easily lose the real heart of any story—if you're careless—will help keep you honest. You look at the truths in each scene, you examine what your characters are thinking and saying to one another, and if you find any crap you just throw it out...

13. Where did the character of Abner come from?—and Dawn?

Abner is a composite of three Special Forces men I had contact with and a Pennsylvania stone mason and war veteran whom I admired. Dawn?—Somewhere out of the blue...

14. Did you concoct the characters, or did they write themselves?

They pretty much wrote themselves.

15. Where does your inspiration come from?

STORY is where it's AT. Once the story comes clear, everything else is easy. Clarity, clarity, clarity...then you don't have to force anything. Sometimes you wait a time for those bits and pieces of story to coalesce...but draw back, give them space, and they do.

16. Is Dawn the real hero of the story?

Maybe... But this is a story about Dawn AND Abner—a man and a woman who find out they really NEED each other. So, even though Dawn emerged during the writing as a powerful character, in some ways stealing the spotlight, she is still only part of this duality. They are both heroes in their

own personal way. And please don't forget my third Ace—Pip.

17. Did you write 3 Aces with a specific audience in mind?

No. But much to my amazement, among my local readers I find women really attracted to this book. Promotional people may understand these things better than I do, but despite some very harsh military and road scenes, 3 Aces is a book both women and men (ages 25 to 75) should have no trouble reading.