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## Local author makes his way into fiction

by Joseph Palmersheim

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It's something he'd always wanted to do.

Now, he's gone and actually done it.

Local author John Carson's debut novel, "Ramblin' Rose and the Internet Newsletter," will be hitting shelves nationwide this spring. Two of his poems have been published in the Monticello Times, and this spring, a poem dedicated to his late mother was published in Ideals, a nationwide periodical. But this is the first time he'd published a novel.

"It's an action adventure story," Carson explained. "The main character is a 12-year old girl named Rose. They call her "Ramblin' Rose," because she talks a lot. She also writes a newsletter for the all-girls school that she goes to, and she publishes it on the Internet. When she was a young girl, about 6 years old, her grandfather used to tell her wild stories. And she'd say, 'Oh Grandpa,' she knew when he was stretching the truth. Well, he always told her, 'You know, Rose, there's some truth in every story and it's up to you to find it.' "

### Goals in book, goals in life

John Carson's first novel comes out locally in January, and hits stores nationwide in the spring. (Photo by Joseph Palmersheim)

The book is three short stories published in one book, all involving Ramblin' Rose getting into (and out of) some kind of trouble. In the first book, Rose breaks a special plate and gets kidnapped to Russia. In the second book, Rose foils a terrorist plot in Peru, and in the third book, Rose is in the right place at the right time (in Alaska, no less) to stop a plot to steal secrets from the United States.

Rose's goal in life is to win a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting, something that will never end up happening in book form.

"Of course, Rose will never grow up. This character is going to stay locked in time and hopefully become a classic."

One of Carson's goals is to see Ramblin' Rose end up on the silver screen.

"I've always seen it as a movie— from the moment it came to me, for the whole last six years now," Carson revealed. "It took me five years to write it, and it's written for all ages and would be a great family movie. I've always had Steven Spielberg in mind."

### A writer before all else

Carson has been writing for 40 years, starting when he was 14. But there's more to Carson's writing than just novels. He's a second generation poet, following in the footsteps of his mother, who died 15 years ago.

"I have two sides to my writing, the novel side and the poetry side," Carson said. "Poetry is where I really learned how to write, and how I cut my teeth. The novels I've written so far have been written in first person because I believe that a good way to learn to write a novel is to do it from the inside out."

Thirty three years ago, Carson met his writing partner and great inspiration: his wife Marlene.

"I was so impressed," Carson recalled. "She was so sharp and smart. She loves geography and history and could tell you a lot about the world, so a lot of Rose's inspiration came from my wife."

Another part of Carson's inspiration came from an unlikely source: a teenaged wizard.

"I wanted something that could go up against Harry Potter," Carson said. "I wanted to do something the opposite of Harry Potter. It's a great character, a wonderful story and everything else. I don't want to be negative about anything, but I got so tired of hearing about Harry Potter that I said, 'Okay, I'm going to do the exact opposite.' "

### **Tall tales, grandchildren**

Some of the ideas for the "Ramblin' Rose" stories were nothing new— Carson had been telling his own children stories for years and some of them ended up manifesting themselves in the book. He's glad he told his children stories, no matter how crazy they may have seemed at the time.

"I think it gave them an advantage," Carson said. "They didn't just accept everything at face value. They thought about it, and they'd try to figure it out. "What's really back there?" "

Now that his children have families of their own, Carson hopes that "Ramblin' Rose" will be the legacy he leaves his grandchildren, as they live too far away for him to tell them stories like he told his kids.

"Ramblin' Rose and the Internet Newsletter" will be available locally in January, can be ordered online in February, and will hit stores nationwide sometime in the spring. Aspirations Media, Inc., a new local publisher, chose the book to be one of two debut publications. The process has given him a new respect for what goes into the making of a book.

"Now, I see the process that I never thought about when I'd go to a store and take book off the shelf," Carson elaborated. "What goes into that? I used to think that, 'Oh, what fun, how easy to be a writer.' But, you know something, that's a lot of work, and when I look at other authors, I'm just blown away. I have immense respect for anyone who works with words. Anyone who thinks it's easy? Well, it's not."

"Something to look forward to"

For the past 32 years, Carson has worked at a Lunds Grocery store.

"I'm getting about ready to retire," Carson said. "If the book does well, it should be enough where I can take my retirement and work on writing full time. I've got another totally separate novel that's finished, another one is half finished. I've got three other novels planned, and a fourth Rose story."

Carson said that there are days where he wakes up and feels 10 years older than he is, but that writing's successes have kept him going.

"This book has done more to make me feel young again than anything else, other than my family." Carson said.

Some of the people he works with are dreading their upcoming retirement, he said. But Carson isn't.

"Some of them don't have anything to look forward to," Carson opines. "Nothing to do but watch TV. Your income gets cut in half and so do your options. I don't want to retire from working—I just want to retire from my job and work with writing. I have something to look forward to, and that's an incredible thing to have."

In giving a story with a happy ending to the world, John Carson ended up making one for himself.

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