



1) When did you start writing?

I started out as a screenwriter in the early 1980s but had little success. I wrote an unpublished novel in 1982, and published my first book in 1988. Back then I was writing under a different name. In fact, I've written under three different names over the last fifteen years, and I've published sixteen books in that time.

2) How did you come to writing? Did anything in your studies/career prepare you for it?

Because I expected to work in the movie business, I majored in Film Studies in college. This entailed watching a lot of movies - which turned out to be pretty good training for a career as a novelist, because it gave me a sense of how to tell a story. Writing scripts was also useful, even though most of them never sold.

3) Did you decide straight away that you wanted your first book published?

My very first book, written in 1982, was never published. It was lousy, as you would expect of a first effort. I did make a token effort to sell it, without success. By the time I wrote my first published book, I had sold some scripts and magazine articles, so I had a pretty good idea of how to write something commercially viable.

4) How difficult was it to have this first book published?

It was surprisingly easy. My agent sent it to five publishers, and three made offers. The amount of money was very small, though. By the time I wrote "Comes the Dark", my first book under the name Michael Prescott, I had already sold a number of novels, so getting published was not an obstacle. I did hope to have "Comes the Dark" published in hardcover, but unfortunately this didn't happen. Hardcover continues to elude me even after fifteen years. I keep chasing it, like Ahab chasing Moby-Dick, but without success.

5) How was the book received? By the critics - by the public?

"Comes the Dark" got pretty good responses and sold quite well. Some people felt the book was too long and went into too much detail about the characters. I think there's some truth to this - the book could have been shorter. In my subsequent books, I've tried to establish a faster pace.

6) Can you handle criticism?

You have to be able to handle it if you're going to work in this business, especially now that the Internet allows people to post reviews anonymously. When people are anonymous, it sometimes brings out the worst in them!

7) Does it take a lot of research to write any of your books?

I spend a great deal of time on research. I may spend more time researching than actually writing, unfortunately. I used to frequent the library; now I do almost all research via the Internet.

8) Are you a full-time writer or do you have another job?

I've been a full-time writer since the mid-1980s, though at times it has been a struggle to make ends meet. My recent books have been profitable for me, but a lot of the earlier ones were not. I often thought about quitting, but to be honest, I could never think of another career that I was qualified for! I suppose a degree in Film Studies doesn't give you a lot of options.

9) What are your plans for the future?

I'm finishing my sixth Michael Prescott book now (my seventeenth overall). I guess I'll try negotiating another contract after that, and just keep going as long as I can. My main objectives are to get better as a writer and to learn more - not just about writing, but about life in general. I've known people whose ideas about life seem to solidify when they're eighteen, and they never change or grow from that point forward. To me, this would be a kind of hell. I started as an atheist and a philosophical materialist, and have become much more spiritual and open to all kinds of ideas and possibilities that I never would have considered ten years ago. I hope to continue this process, and perhaps see it reflected in my books.

10) Who's your own favourite crime writer? By the way, do you like other genres as well?

Two of my favorites are Michael Connelly and Jeffrey Deaver. There are some talented new writers out there, too, like Danielle Girard. Besides suspense fiction, I read a lot of classics and nonfiction, as well as historical novels. One of the best historicals I've read is Steven Pressfield's "Gates of Fire", an extraordinary recreation of the Battle of Thermopylae. "The Pillars of the Earth", by Ken Follett, is another outstanding historical novel. I read both of those books virtually nonstop, barely pausing even to eat. That's the way I hope my own books grab my readers. I want to keep them on the edge of their seat!