

BookLife Talks with John Warner

A former professional racing driver, Warner's lifelong passion for Porsches led to two creative endeavors: a documentary series on the early bootlegging days of NASCAR, titled *The Golden Era of NASCAR*, and a series of historical novels, published in 2019, about the race to steal covert technology before and during WWII.

You started writing *Little Anton* while you were recovering from a racing car accident. Can you talk a bit about that?

I was a professional racer in the American Le Mans Series and Grand-Am. After a high-speed accident in a Porsche 911 GT3 R, I had two back surgeries. Two years later, a good friend of mine told me to buy a laptop and write. I thought he was out of his mind, but he was right. I could indeed write a decent story, and it kept me sane despite the chronic pain. Still does. Pain is a teacher, and it forces me to focus deep inside myself for wisdom and clarity, much like meditation.

To what extent did you draw from real life, and what responsibility do you feel to reimagine or change characters based on real people?

I drew from real life as much as possible, and much of the book is based on true stories. The fictional characters are based on composites of real people, plus a little imaginative color on my part. For Ferdinand Porsche, I had to go on the little human tidbits found in books, since most of his background is dry engineering. The characters are multifaceted, flawed, and complex, and that makes them truly interesting.

What kind of research did you do to ensure historical accuracy?

I went to Germany and Austria twice to meet with museum representatives and the few people who remembered the Porsche family story. As for the rest, it took many research books—so many, it bogged my mind. History sticks in my head, especially the new wave of revisionist history and the open-book Polish and Russian WWII archives that have much less redaction.

Who is your ideal reader and why?

I don't have an ideal reader. The folks who like the book are tremendously varied, but I did strive to appeal to women, since my main character is a young woman. The few and the brave who have finished the entire three-part juggernaut really liked it. The book is not for the faint of heart or the impatient.

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When can readers expect the sequel?

I'm currently working on it. It is a direct sequel titled *Lion, Tiger, Bear*. Bea and the gang are back, fit and fierce and zestier than

ever. It's a much shorter book, and it centers on the Desert War in 1942.

For more, visit booklife.com/warner

