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## Public relations coordinator has a secret side

BY Tom Netherland



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WYTHEVILLE – Stephen King reigns as today's most prominent author of horror fiction. He looks the part, too, like some mad gravedigger who lurks in the shadows.

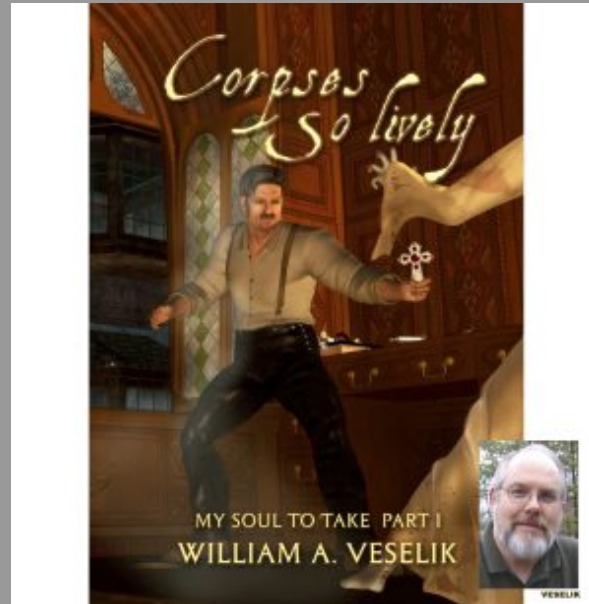
William A. Veselik looks quite like a public relations coordinator, which is exactly what he is by day at Wytheville Community College. He's 49, married, and is the father of a young son.

Yet unlike King, Veselik for a time was indeed a gravedigger. Like King, Veselik also writes horror fiction. His second published novel and first in a trilogy, "My Soul to Take, Part 1: Corpses So Lively" (Mundania Press, \$14.95), hit stores on Oct. 22.

"The trilogy was started in 1991," Veselik said by phone Thursday evening from his home in Marion. "I wrote that, finished it, and submitted it to publishers, including my current one, who rejected it because of its length."

However, Veselik's "Weep not for the Vampire" was accepted, by Mundania Press, and released in 2006. By that point he had already written a slew of books, at least three more of which are scheduled for release by 2009.

"Before I got my contract for five books," the Virginia Tech graduate said, "I had already finished



William Veselik recently released his second published novel and first in a trilogy, "My Soul to Take, Part 1: Corpses So Lively" (Mundania Press, \$14.95). By day he's public relation coordinator at a Southwest Virginia community college, and by night he's typing out a shadowy story.

about eight or nine books."

That includes what has become the trilogy "My Soul to Take." Split into a trilogy at the suggestion of his publisher, Veselik said that each concludes with a cliffhanger so as to invite readers to purchase the follow-up.

Now, despite the titles of his books, the Halifax County native mostly avoids graphic gore. Instead, his novels read much as such Hammer Horror films of the late 1960s and '70s as "Horror of Dracula" appeared on screen.

"The book that's out now and the two on the way are kind of like that, scary without a lot of gore," Veselik said.

Hollywood's horror films of yore heavily inspire Veselik. From Universal's cadre of classics of the 1930s and '40s like "Frankenstein" and "Dracula" to the aforementioned series of Hammer horror films in which stars like Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing revamped vampires and monsters on screen, strong stories overrode a need for gratuitous gore.

So it goes with Veselik's books, too.

"When I write a book I think probably in terms of a movie director," he said. "Being a child of motion pictures, you play it out in your head as if you're watching it on the screen. Also, with those old Hammer movies you had a bad guy and a good guy. My characters have that definition of who is the good guy and who is the bad guy."

Astute colleagues, friends and family of Veselik may recognize certain aspects of certain characters in his books. For good reason – as he said that he sometimes employs bits and pieces of people that he knows into his characters. Also, folks in Marion may be interested to know that Marion figures in Veselik's "Weep not for the Vampire."

"My wife sometimes says she recognizes a person that's so and so," Veselik said.

However, he does not subscribe to the often held belief that writers should write about that which they know or are most familiar. Think about that, and then consider the genre in which Veselik writes.

"There are some people who say write what you know," Veselik said, "and yet if you write what you know then how can you write about vampires even though vampires do not exist?"

Courtesy such films as "Dracula" starring Bela Lugosi, we "know" that vampires arise from the dead. Veselik knows something of the dead. As mentioned, he worked for a short time as a gravedigger while attending college. He and his brother split \$150 per grave dug, each of which by the way was dug with shovels and picks.

Now get this. Veselik writes horror books and his brother works as a funeral director.

"He's the last guy that will let you down," Veselik said, humor firmly at hand.

Most might suppose that given his gravedigger past that Veselik would find inspiration for writing

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horror fiction in graveyards. Not so.

"I often go back to movies that affected me in some way or another," he said. "I'm very fond of the 2004 remake of "Dawn of the Dead." Sometimes I'm just driving home and I'll see something that strikes me as odd. But I don't go and sit in cemeteries."

And apparently Veselik will not be going to any book signings in the near future, either. He said that to date none are scheduled, though that may change.

Meanwhile, to those who view horror fiction as fanciful at best and shameful at worst, bear in mind such classic literature as Bram Stoker's "Dracula" of old and Stephen King's "Salem's Lot" of late. Good stories can fuel even the scariest of books.

Veselik said that he approaches writing with exactly that in mind.

"First and foremost, they're good stories," Veselik said. "The storytelling is good."

## INFO

Title: "My Soul to Take, Part 1: Corpses So Lively"

Author: William A. Veselik

Publisher: Mundania Press

Available at local bookstores and such online retailers as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

Web: [www.livelycorpses.com](http://www.livelycorpses.com)

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