

THE HOT AUTHOR REPORT – June 23, 2010

Hot Author Report

<http://www.thehotauthorreport.com/interview-with-sam-hilliard-author-of-the-last-track>

Born in Kansas City, MO, near the center of the United States, Sam Hilliard arrived during a very scary period of the 1970s. Since then he has lived on both coasts and quite a few places in between. Currently, Sam resides outside New York City with his girlfriend, and an army of four cats—one feline under the legal limit. His first book, *The Last Track: A Mike Brody Novel*, a mystery/thriller, released this Spring. When Sam's not writing, he's the Director of IT at an all-girl boarding school where he gets to observe world-class drama firsthand. It's also the reason he studies Krav Maga and Tai Chi.

Q: Tell us briefly about your book.

The Last Track is the story of Mike Brody, a tracker who can tap into the memory and emotional state of those he pursues. More than just a master tracker, Mike is a former Special Forces operative, smoke jumper, and now extreme adventure tour guide. He is recruited to find a missing, asthmatic boy (and unwitting murder witness) in the rugged terrain surrounding a dude ranch in Montana where Mike and his family are vacationing.

Fearful of capture, the boy has burrowed deep into the woods. As Mike tracks the boy, the killer pursues them both. Meanwhile, Mike's ex-wife—a well-connected journalist—uses her contacts to unravel the killer's identity. Her discoveries ensnare them all in a treacherous conspiracy.

Q: What are you working on at the moment?

I'm working on two very different manuscripts. One is a sequel to *The Last Track* scheduled for release during the Holiday season 2011. The other is a more personal story that I have wrestled with finishing many times over the past few years. Although I have yet to muster the courage, I find myself drifting towards it.

Q: How do you balance out the writer's life and the rest of life? Do you get up early? Stay up late? Ignore friends and family for certain periods of time?

I think one imperative for a writer is to surround themselves with people who understand the vanishing act some projects require. The ideal is to write late at night or early in the morning when everyone else is asleep anyway, but there are times when this is impossible.

Eventually, there comes a point where the only way to finish a book is by cutting yourself off from everyone you can and writing every spare moment. Once the manuscript attains this critical mass, even when I'm away from the keyboard and with people, my mind keeps churning, processing the story. It definitely makes dinner conversations . . . interesting to say the least. With the right people around you, there's less need to be accommodating. They already know that sometimes they come second and why.

Q: Is there anyone who has inspired, motivated, encouraged or supported your writing?

In school, two teachers encouraged me more than the rest, Brenda Bigelow and later Dr. Mary Balkun. I can't say I deserved their encouragement at the time, but I always recognized what a big difference it makes when someone you respect believes in your writing.

Q: Is there any particular book that, when you read it, you thought, "I wish I had written that!"?

Anything by Gillian Flynn Nolan. I'm very partial to her work. She's from the Midwest, and writes great character-driven stories that are haunting, believable and engaging all at the same time. Except for the Midwest upbringing, I'm not claiming any similarity to her work.

Q: Have you ever had a character take over a story and move it in a different direction than you had originally intended? How did you handle it?

Yes, and that's the point when the real writing happens. I get out of the way and let the characters run with the story, because from those moments, some of the most creative ideas—however contrary to my initial intentions they appear—are born. I table any inconsistencies for later, trusting that I can find a place to snap the new piece into the larger jigsaw puzzle when the time comes.

Q: It's one thing to write a book and another to edit it. How do you feel about the editing process? What was it like to edit your book?

I love editing. I like the precision and the back and forth, and even the fact that no matter how many times an eagle-eye editor scours a piece, someone eventually uncovers a wrinkle everyone else missed. I spent lots of time soliciting feedback from readers about the manuscript. Later the publisher brought in a great editor, copy editors, and proofreaders, who made enormous contributions as well.

There is a time and a place for serious editing. Getting a piece of writing ready for publication requires creativity, but it also requires an obsession with details. Writing and editing depend on the efforts of two separate parts of the brain. Not so much polar opposites, but working from either means taking two very different approaches to the pages.

For the same reason it is difficult to see the forest for the trees. The mind must choose one perspective over the other. If a writer constantly flips between writing and editing, the brain will shut down the creative side until it has time to recover. This makes gathering traction a lot harder. I spent years fighting a story before finally admitting that was what I was doing.

Q: Best way for readers to keep in touch?

Writing novels is one of the many items on my bucket list; I'm working on a number of goals. Check 'em out at my [website/blog](#), which I update regularly.

The easiest way to buy *The Last Track* is on Amazon.com or B&N.com. Your local bookstore can order it for you from Ingram or B&T. ISBN 9780984203512, Trade Paper. It is also available in a kindle version on Amazon. There is a lot of information about me and *The Last Track* on my [publisher's website](#) (Buddhapuss Ink LLC) as well.

Website: <http://www.samhilliard.com/wordpress>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/samhilliard>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/thelasttrack>

Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/user/buddhapussinkllc>

Publisher's site: <http://www.buddhapussink.com>