

CHAT WITH SAM HILLIARD – June 10, 2010

*Pump Up Your Book* – Dorothy Thompson

<http://www.pumpupyourbook.com/2010/06/10/pump-up-your-book-chats-with-sam-hilliard/>

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 observes world-class drama firsthand. It's also the reason he studies Krav Maga and Tai Chi.

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>



**Thank you for this interview, Sam. Do you remember writing stories as a child or did the writing bug come later? Do you remember your first published piece?**

Reading was my first love; an interest in writing came much later. 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 recognized what a big difference it can make when someone you respect believes in your writing. In the intervening years between college and starting *The Last Track*, I basically fought writing every step of the way.

The first piece of writing I received some compensation for was during high school, when I wrote a series of short but very acerbic movie reviews for the local newspaper.

**What do you consider as the most frustrating side of becoming a published author and what has been the most rewarding?**

Randy Pausch said something like the wall between you and your goal offers you a chance to prove how badly you really want what's on the other side of it. Framing challenges like that helps defuse some of the frustrations of the path to being published.

As for the most rewarding, it is nice to see the bound book, with its glossy cover, on a shelf. Someone just sent me a picture of *The Last Track* in their library, filed right after Fitzgerald and Hemingway. It just doesn't get any better than that.

**Are you married or single and how do you combine the writing life with home life? Do you have support?**

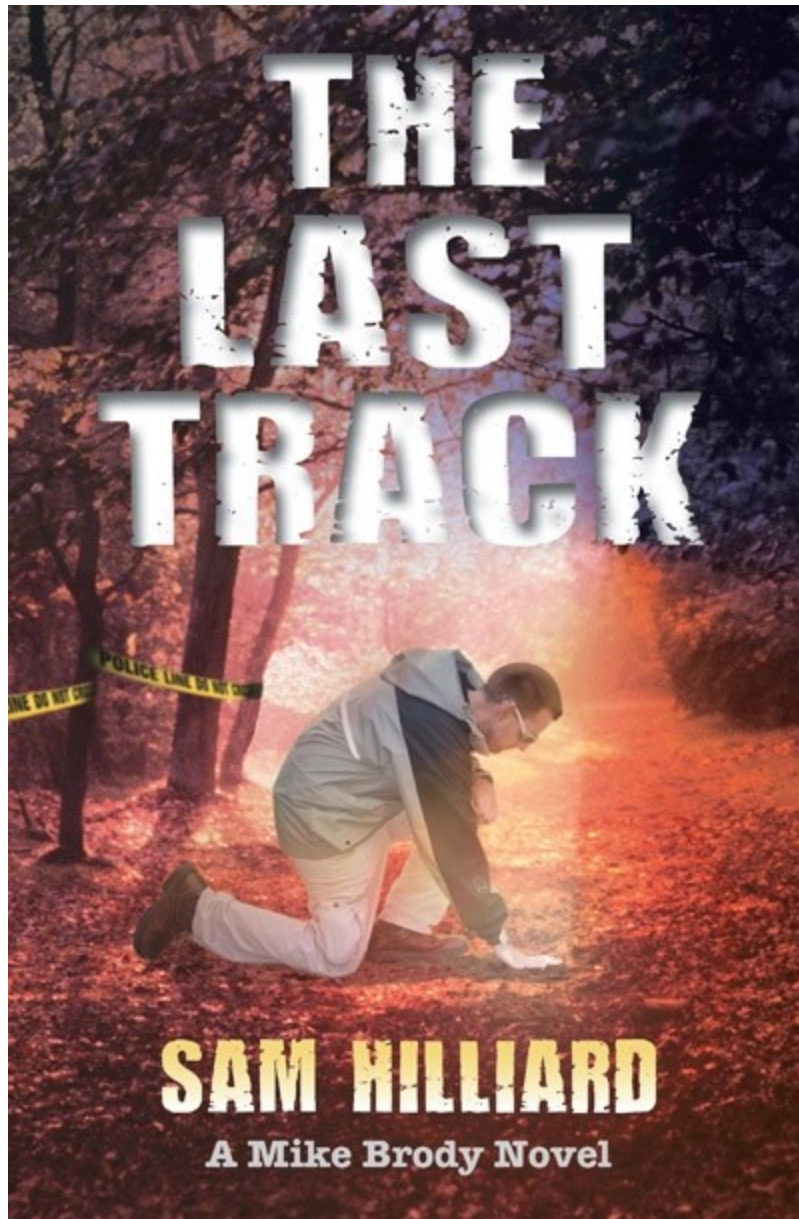
Right now I live with a poet (Lisa Sisler), which is a fantastic experience. For me, the only way to combine the writing life with the home life is to live with someone who understands the process and the resulting emotions, without taking either personally. That means living either with another writer or with someone who is very empathetic yet thick skinned at the same time.

The fact that she writes poetry instead of fiction keeps us from butting heads, too. Poets try to change the world 100 words at a time, while novelists avoid revealing anything about themselves in nearly 100,000. Poets nurture a sense of camaraderie among their peers; they honestly want to see other poets succeed. Not so for novelists, who often imagine their colleagues—read the competition—tumbling headfirst down a concrete stairwell. If there's a team of rabid alligators waiting at the bottom, even better.

**What do you like to do for fun when you're not writing? Where do you like to vacation? Can you tell us briefly about this?**

When I'm not writing I study Krav Maga (and bits and pieces of other martial arts), play bass and guitar. Where time allows I work out, usually 4-5 days week. I keep delaying the completion of my skydiving license, but if I put my intentions out into the universe enough times, well, I'll just have to follow through.

I've learned to enjoy traveling as an adult, as a kid we couldn't get anywhere and back fast enough for my liking. I really liked Switzerland and Moscow; I plan on seeing St. Petersburg, Finland, Australia and Alaska in the next few years.



**If you could be anywhere in the world for one hour right now, where would that place be and why?**

Churchill, Manitoba watching the Northern Lights dance across the sky. The wonder of it trumps any description I might muster.

**Who is your biggest fan?**

I'm not going to drop names, since a number of people have told me they are my biggest fan, and it is my job not to disabuse them. Personally I like to think I'm the biggest fan of Betty White.

### **Where's your favorite place to write at home?**

Whether on a laptop or a desktop computer, I will only use a keyboard placed on a flat surface, one deep enough it that supports my forearms from wrist to elbow, and keeps the two joints as close to parallel at all times. Carpal tunnel syndrome has claimed far better authors than me, and so far this configuration has prevented it. So that sort of writing desk is my first, my last, my everything.

### **Do you have any pets?**

Meet the Cat Army: Oedipus, Electra, Mooshy and Abra. It's a blended squad, with half the unit loyal to me, the remaining troops answer to Lisa.

### **Tell us a secret no one else knows.**

I think when Death finally comes knocking, he'll first try and sell me a set of those Japanese knives they hawk on late night infomercials.

### **What's on your to do list today?**

- 1) To make it through this and twenty-seven other interviews alive.
- 2) Clean the cat box.

Not necessarily in that order.

### **Now I've got a couple of fun questions for you. If Tom Hanks, in the movie Cast Away, unearthed a copy of your book, how would that help him find a way off the island?**

Mr. Hanks would actually stay on the island and read the book aloud over and over to Wilson.

### **You have a chance to appear on the hit talent show for authors, American Book Idol, with judges Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson, Kara Dioguardi and the newest addition, Ellen DeGeneres, to determine whether your book will make it to Hollywood and become a big screenplay where you'd make millions of dollars. What would impress them more – your book cover, an excerpt or your author photo – and why?**

I would direct them to the [book trailer](#), which is a mini movie in itself. As a bonus, the book cover appears at the end.

**You just got word that your book has received the 2010 NY Times Bestselling Book Award and you have to attend the ceremony to give an acceptance speech. Anyone who's anyone will be there and it's your shot for stardom. What would you say and who would you thank?**

Probably something like, "And they told me I couldn't sleep my way to the top!" Then I'd recite the 2 pages of acknowledgements from the back of my book. At that point they would likely cut to a commercial while they carried me bodily from the stage, still clinging to the microphone.

**I understand that you are touring with Pump Up Your Book Promotion in June and July via a virtual book tour. Can you tell us all why you chose a virtual book tour to promote your book online?**

I like traveling but hate waiting in security lines. Going virtual sidesteps the inconvenience of a pat down. A virtual tour is cheaper than traveling as well. My credo has always been never pay retail, which definitely rules out flying this summer.

**Thank you for this interview, Sam. Good luck on your virtual book tour!**

The honor is all on this side of the screen. Thanks for your time!

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