

Ralph Smith pens Christian fantasy book

By **KATIE EUBANKS**
Sun Staff Writer

NORTHSIDER Ralph Smith says he's had "loads of stories rolling around" in his head for a while.

Last August, he put two of those stories together and ended up writing his first novel.

The resulting self-published book, "Seal of the King," is a Christian fantasy with a romance between two characters, Aurora and David, who live in different worlds but have visions of each other throughout their lives.

"The man lives in modern day. She lives 500 to 1,000 years behind, if you will, technologically. She's in trouble. She's been fighting a battle with evil people, and he shows up to save her. He's somehow able to cross into her world," Smith says.

"God showed them each other and let them have the choice, basically."

And the story continues from there, with the protagonists fulfilling a prophecy, falling in love, and meeting various characters along the way.

Smith says his book is really about faith, and that he wanted to write an engaging fantasy adventure that would also be a positive influence in the lives of teens and young adults.

"I wanted to appeal to young people who are attracted to that fantasy realm. If you can give them an exciting story that relates to our faith – that would be my wildest dream, to accomplish that for even two kids, one kid," he says.

"My son [William], who's 12, loved it. So I'm thrilled with that."

Smith has three sons - William, Nathan and David - and each has a character named after him in the book.

IT ONLY TOOK about six months for Smith to finish the first draft of the book –



What started as writing two stories turned into a book for Ralph Smith

but then the revision process started.

His wife, Martha, supported him by helping fix grammatical errors, as did a host of other people who offered constructive advice.

Graphic designer Sarah Scarborough, who works for Smith at EdaptIT Technology Solutions, did the cover art.

By late September, Smith was ordering revised copies of his work from Amazon, through which he'd published the book.

"There's nothing more inspiring than having the first copy of your book in your hand or seeing people downloading it," he says.

Amazon allowed five days of free down-

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loads after the first edition was published, and in those five days, 350 people got the Kindle version of the book.

"I actually got up to number one in Christian fantasy and number two in sci-fi/fantasy," he says.

Part of the hype came from a built-in audience Smith had from another endeavor: In 2012, Smith encouraged fans of the canceled TV series "Legend of the Seeker" to break the world record for most comments on a Facebook page, in an effort to bring back the show.

Fans of "Seeker" obliterated the record by posting nearly 1.8 million comments in less than a year. The page also garnered the interest of TV networks and syndicators, though it is unclear whether the series will return.

So when Smith finished his book, he was connected with more than the usual number of potential readers.

"One person put on Facebook, 'I started it at nine. Now it's midnight, and I've got to put it down.' That's encouraging. I love it when people tell me they love it."

"SEAL OF THE KING" is the first published effort from Smith, who wanted to be an author as a teen but never got there until now.

"I've started four or five books in the past, and I have them all," Smith says.

He said the fantasy world gave him more possibilities for the plotline of "Seal," but he wanted the story to remain believable.

"Yes there are demons, but not dragons and trolls. I wanted it to be grounded in what our reality and faith would be, so it would be relatable.

"It's about trusting in God even when we can't see how it'll work out. And it's about what it means to have a godly relationship," he says.

"I hate being toyed with on the relationships [in books and movies]. 'Do I like him? Do I really like him?' I'd rather fill the book with other obstacles. They're either in it together or they're not."

And yes, there will be a sequel. Smith is already halfway through writing it. He says this could turn into a series of three or four books.

"But I wanted to give people the satisfaction of a completed story [with book one]," he says, so readers needn't worry about cliffhangers.

"Seal of the King" is available on www.amazon.com in paperback or e-book. It should be sold locally soon, and readers can get a sneak peek before buying at www.sealoftheking.com.

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