

Author sets book around Waterton

By **Wade Paterson**
Reporter

Despite being a hard-working dentist, Dr. Bernie Unrau doesn't take summers off to relax.

For him, the tamest of the four seasons is spent indoors, at his desk, pumping out medical science fiction thrillers. He's continued this tradition since 1989, resulting in more than 20 self-published novels.

His years as an employee in Waterton Lakes National Park gave him the idea for his latest work of fiction.

"I spent many of my formative years in Waterton. I spent about five summers down there in the mid-80s running the tour boat," said Unrau.

"At the end of the day I usually spent my time in the lobby of the old Prince of Wales Hotel."

Unrau said his curiosity about the unique architectural masterpiece increased as he continually heard famous Waterton ghost stories from locals.

"I often wondered about

the old place and I was given a few special tours and was actually led inside the inner workings of the hotel, through some of the secret passageways."

The Calgary dentist saw a similarity between the Prince of Wales Hotel and the Overlook Hotel: the setting of Stephen King's 1977 horror novel, *The Shining*.

"It had been almost 30 years since *The Shining* came out. I figured maybe it's a good time to do a story, there might be something here."

The book follows Dr. Gum, a protagonist who Unrau admits is based loosely on himself. Gum plans to investigate the Prominence of Way Hotel after a series of paranormal activity reportedly occurs. Meanwhile, in the Weeping Willow Lounge, native tarot cards unveil an ill-fated future for the fictional dentist. Gum and his new bride Roxy move into the hotel and quickly get caught up in a series of horrific events.

Though Unrau wanted the setting of Waterton to stick in readers' minds, he changed the names of various locations for fictional purposes.

"Waterton became Wutherington; Emerald Bay became Enchanted Bay. Everything was changed except for Crypt Lake."

Unrau has no problem with those who judge a book by his cover. The novelist said that the front is one of his favourite features of the book.

"The cover of the book is a photo I took of the hotel. But to compress it into the 4x7 cover looks creepier, so it just turns into a great shocking story." Unrau has big plans for his



Wade Paterson photo

Bernie Unrau's newest book is a fictional tale that is loosely based on the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton Lakes National Park. The book was written in the summer of 2009 and Unrau hopes it will be made into a film adaptation.



Submitted photo

The cover of Bernie Unrau's fictional book loosely based on the Prince of Wales Hotel.

newest novel. He said that a film version is currently in the works.

"The book was adapted into a screenplay and that's been reviewed now by a number of producers. I had a long discussion with an L.A. company and I was truly trying to pitch the area."

Though time will tell whether or not Unrau's science fiction will take off, he said that the setting will appeal to the Waterton crowd who don't mind being spooked.

Do you have a story idea?

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