

## 5 Fast Questions with Author Jamie Dodson

### Q: Where did the idea for the Nick Grant Adventure series come from?

A: "When I was stationed in Hawaii in 1982, I rekindled my childhood passion for learning more about the era of the flying boats.

"One weekend my son and I were riding bikes when a rainstorm led us to duck into a library for cover. While there, we found *Timmy Rides the China Clipper*, a picture book written by Carol Nay in 1939. It was about a trip on the famed Pan Am flying boat *China Clipper*.

"The librarian, an elderly Japanese-American woman, told me she remembered the clippers and that they were a big deal. She remembered as a young girl getting out of school to watch them land; people would throw leis to the passengers as they deplaned. I met several people who talked about the excitement around the flying boats.

Then coming across the place where the first flying boat landed in 1935 just increased my fascination. So, that's where I first got the idea for a novel about the flying boat era."

### Q: Are you Nick Grant?

A: "No, Nick is a fictional character named after a real person, a former boss and mentor, General Nicholas P. Grant. He is a retired senior intelligence officer and pilot who flew collection missions during the Cold War. But my Nick is a combination of the physical and personality traits of my sons, Ian and Neil.

"Many of the characters are real people in a historical setting but told through fictional characters. The events closely follow the historical record.

### Q: How long have you been writing novels?

A: "Well," Jamie chuckled, "I could say that I've writing fiction since my early days as an intelligence analyst. Only back then, I didn't realize that my predictions about our Communist adversaries would turn out to be mostly fiction.

"I had the idea back in 1982, but I never had the time as an active-duty intelligence officer working 50-60 hours a week and raising a family. When my wife, Joan, and I moved to Alabama in 2001, it was one of the few times since 1982 that the family had lived outside of Army quarters.

"After I retired from the Army, I got the idea for the character, Nick Grant. Then, I was only working 40 hours a week. Rather than completely drive my wife crazy, I decided to start to try

to do something with my idea. I thought, what if I weave the story around building the Pacific Island flying boat bases, told through a fictional character.

“Initially I set goals, deadlines and milestones. I thought it would take me six months,” Jamie says, laughing. “It took me five years and numerous rewrites to land my first contract. Just because I read a lot didn’t mean I knew how to write.”

**Q: Did you envision writing four books when you started?**

**A:** Not really, but so many readers contacted me about a sequel, and ideas keep flowing, so I decided to keep developing them. In addition to the Nick Grant series, I have a non-fiction anthology, *Hunting the Wind*, due to be published in 2018. I am also working on the fifth Nick Grant novel, *Samoan Clipper* and a non-fiction memoir about the Montagnards – the forgotten indigenous warriors of Vietnam.

**Q: What advice do you have for new writers?**

**A:**

- Seek out other writers who are serious about becoming authors and read your work to them. Better yet, find a published author who will agree to be a mentor.
- Join a writer’s critique group. The closer to your genre the better. If you want to write murder mysteries, don’t join a Christian writers’ group.
- I found Stephen King’s *On Writing, a Memoir of the Craft* to be of immense value, and I highly recommend it. There are many books about how to write a novel, but for me King offers the soundest advice in an easy-to-digest package.
- Take a creative writing class at a local college or junior college.
- If nothing else, read your work out loud. It is amazing how much that alone can hone your skills.