

Author Leo Cohen says:

Writing makes him 'king of my little domain'

Letter From a Fictitious Person

Leo Cohen

By Erika Nichols-Frazer

Former longtime Valley resident Leo Cohen, 90, now of Yucca Valley, CA, has always loved to read and write. He was drafted in 1955 and joined a division he referred to as "The Night Phones," as in, people waiting for the call that their unit was being attacked in the middle of the night. His shifts were mid-night to 6 a.m. and, he said,

"There was nothing but reading books to do." (Fortunately, he never got that late-night call.) He read a lot of novels and "I started playing around with short stories," written by hand. "That seed was planted way back when." His influences include E.L. Doctorow and Kurt Vonnegut, whom he called "a marvelously entertaining writer."

While he continued to enjoy reading and writing, Cohen made his career in the early computer industry and retired to the Mad River Valley in 1980. After periods living in The Valley and near his son in Durango, CO, he relocated to be closer to his daughter after his wife passed away a year ago. He and his 13-year-old dog Cecil spend their days taking long walks, and he writes four to five hours every day.

To date, he's published four novels with Joshua Books, designed and shepherded by RSB Press, owned by Kitty Werner of Waitsfield, who has also published two nonfiction books of her own. Cohen's published novels include

Letter from a Fictitious Person, The Autobiography of a Lesser God, Running from Tomorrow, and An Almost Perfect Murder. He has two more novels in production and is currently working on a seventh novel. When he was ready to bring his first novel to press, he reached out to friends and family about how to publish it and Werner responded. "She is a person I trust completely," Cohen said.

"I've known Leo for decades through the Valley Players," Werner said. "I've been helping authors publish for 15 years now. When I read Leo's first book, "Letter from a Fictitious Person," I was blown away. His writing is superb and you are pulled straight into the story. I couldn't stop reading it. The ending was a stunner. The following three books, "Running from Tomorrow," "Autobiography of a Lesser God," and "An Almost Perfect Murder," are just as exciting -- but completely different from each other. Hopefully, we'll have the final two books ready in a few weeks."

Some of the themes Cohen writes about are faith and destiny. He also writes about the places he's traveled on his motorcycle. "Almost everybody I meet and talk to becomes grist for my novelist's mill ... I'd like to be an entertaining writer with things to say," he said. "I really like [writing]. It's fun, I'm king of my little domain."

He said one of the things

he enjoys about writing is being in control. "How often have you looked at yourself and asked 'how much am I in control?' I am in control 128% of all the characters and events in my stories. I'm a little god." He said it's as if he lives the experiences he writes about. "I would strongly recommend the writing life for anyone who wants to get a feel for where they are in the world."

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