

Author's flash fiction lingers with readers

By Renee Tomell
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It's a tour de force turn for Wayne writer Gene McCormick, who jumps from his comfort zone in the nonfiction world into a riveting collection of short stories and poems he describes as narrative dramatizations.

Brevity is the soul of wit, as McCormick uses the ultra-short-form genre to deliver richly condensed intensity in his first foray into fiction with the publication of "Rain on the Sun." He will introduce the new work at a book signing from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday in Lin's Garden Chinese Restaurant in St. Charles.

While his stories grab the reader, the act of creating fiction has become a "compulsion" for the writer, said McCormick, who started the process just last summer after a string of six previous books about such topics as the worlds of chess and horse racing, the most recent being "The Eagle & The Plum" and "The Blue Collar Thoroughbred." In addition, he writes for his marketing company.

"To me, poetry that has to fall into a certain meter or X number of lines per stanza is like a word game," said McCormick, explaining his preference for free verse. "This is narrative stuff. It tells a story. It's about the real world, and it doesn't have the affectation of rhyming or metric-structured poetry."

After some literary magazines published his new writing, he started the book.

"The writing I do is cathartic," he said. "Now, I have to do it. I get frustrated if four or five days go by and I haven't been able to start a new poem or short story."

He's already at work on a second book within the same genre.

"I like the fact that you have to be very concise. There has to be a certain amount of intensity and dramatics," he said.

Q What is "Rain on the Sun" about?

A The poems are all free verse; the stories are reality based, although I refer to several of them as fables. The writing is about adults at work, at play and at life. While "Rain on the Sun" is thematically safe to leave lying around the house, it was written for adults, not children.

Q How much reality crept into the fiction?

A A lot. I've lived in Fox Valley for more than 25 years, and readers will

If you go

WHAT Gene McCormick of Wayne will appear at a signing for his latest book, "Rain on the Sun," a fictional collection of short stories and poetry. All profits from the 80-page paperback will go to the Save-A-Pet animal shelter.



Gene McCormick

WHEN 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE Lin's Garden Chinese Restaurant, 2400

E. Main St., St. Charles, on the northwest corner of Route 64 and Dunham Road.

INFO The event is free; books will be available for purchase for \$14.95. "Rain on the Sun" also is available at Town House Books and Cafe at 105 N. Second Ave., St. Charles, or through BarnesandNoble.com or Amazon.com.

possibly be able to recognize backgrounds — and maybe even the characters — used in many of the stories and poems. The point is to blend realities with fantasy and wishes and what-ifs to produce an entertaining literary moment.

Q Why did you switch to fiction, and why the shorter form?

A I respond to the heightened intensity required of poetry or short stories better than I do, I think, to the meanderings of a nonfiction book or of a novel. Frankly, I was just tired of the challenging constraints of nonfiction and wanted to be a bit more free in my writing.

Q What inspired the title of the book?

A A lot of the poems reflect frustration and futility ... kind of like rain on the sun. (I realized) there's a title. Some of the pieces are darker in nature.

Q What's the charitable aspect of the publication?

A One hundred percent of the profits from all book sales will go to Save-A-Pet. (McCormick and his family have adopted animal companions from the shelter over the years.)

The book's themes are captured on the cover: beauty, surrender, murder, obsessions, celebration, mystery, suicide, cheating, loyalties, fables, rejection, redemption, hustlers, lovers ... and fate