

# HUNTINGTON BEACH INDEPENDENT

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## City Lights

4 books  
in 1 year  
no easy  
task

**I** once flew to England to take a creative writing master's program, and en route, I had a conversation with another aspiring scribe who was hard at work on a novel.

No, it wasn't another student enrolled in the program — it was the cab driver who took me to Los Angeles International Airport. He had a John Grisham-style whodunit in the works, he said, and he jokingly asked if I could put in a good word for him in London.

I've heard it said that everyone has a book in them, and indeed, writing a novel sounds simple until you actually delve into the writing process. First, there are tons of maddening revisions, and



**Michael  
Miller**

then, you have to find people willing to read your manuscript and a publisher willing to put it out. So it takes more than a little mettle to sit down at that computer.

But for C.D. Shelton, a 79-year-old Huntington Beach resident and four-time novelist, that mettle came easily enough.

When I heard that Shelton was going to launch his first book at the Huntington Beach Central Library this month, I was impressed but a little blasé. I've interviewed first-time authors before. Then I read that Shelton had written four novels in the last year, and I was definitely impressed.

I met Shelton on Friday at his home, where he conveniently lives with his publisher. Being that she's his wife, it's a natural arrangement. Danielle Shelton, a retired dentist, launched Choice Publishing House last year as her husband began launching his first manuscript. Their first book, a prehistoric adventure titled "The Age of Eternal Fire," looks as professional as anything by Random House, so I can only guess that she's a natural.

The author, an Army veteran and lifelong educator who teaches biology at East Los Angeles College, told me he got his inspiration from a tape by motivational speaker Earl Nightingale, who talked about the importance of dedication. He had dreamed of writing novels early in life, but got waylaid as family and career plans took priority.

So last year, he opted to make that dream a reality. Four times, as it turned out. Once Shelton finished his first effort in three months, he dove instantly into a sequel, then a third and fourth book. Often, he handwrote his latest manuscript over the weekend while typing his previous effort on the computer during the week.

He found a professional editor through a Craigslist ad while his wife set to work securing a business license and researching the publishing world. The Sheltons plan to place their books on Amazon soon and are seeking a professional distributorship.

It may have been a hasty operation, but the couple's study already looks like the work space of two seasoned professionals. Framed posters of the first two book covers decorate the wall, while the desk sports a neat stack of manuscripts awaiting the printer.

Shelton, who got the idea for his first novel from a Los Angeles Times story about an archaeological expedition, regaled me with a partial summary of the plot, slowing down during the suspenseful parts and using broad gestures. He'd be excellent on TV or radio. Already, Shelton is at work on his fifth volume, and he's hoping to crank out three more in 2010.

"My goal is to keep that pace if I can," he told me. Then he nodded toward his wife: "It's hard work, but I have a good publisher."

Shelton will read from and sign "The Age of Eternal Fire" from 2 to 3 p.m. Saturday and Jan. 30 at 7111 Talbert Ave. For more information, call (714) 960-8839.

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