

University alumnus releases debut novel

BY EMMA AUSTIN

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Authors often say the best way to begin a writing project is to write about what you know. Larry Gildersleeve, WKU alumnus, did exactly that when he began his debut novel, *Dancing Alone Without Music*, two years ago.

Dancing Alone Without Music, released this summer, follows the story of a "church-going Southern boy" whose life turns to materialism and narcissism when he journeys to Chicago to pursue fame and fortune after graduating college, according to a description on Gildersleeve's website.

Gildersleeve said there's a Christian theme running throughout the novel, though it's not heavy handed. This theme follows the protagonist's fall from grace in a material world, then his redemption after an intervention from two men who prevent him from making "the ultimate surrender."

The novel is set half in Chicago and half in Bowling Green, each place holding part of Gildersleeve's personal history.

"Western Kentucky University is featured very prominently and positively," Gildersleeve said. "Specifically with respect to Bowling Green and WKU, I wrote about what was important to me."

Gildersleeve said he has always wanted to be a published author, although he pursued a different career path after leaving WKU with a graduate degree in both broadcast journalism and pre-law. He spent much of his life working in the resort real estate industry in Indianapolis, Florida and Seattle. He returned to Bowling Green with his wife a little over two years ago, which was when he began to write creatively.

"I had always considered myself an accomplished business writer, which has served me well in my career," Gildersleeve said. However, he didn't believe he had the ability to write dialogue, which prevented him from ever trying to write fiction.

Gildersleeve deferred his dream of being a published novelist as he pursued his career, until he sought professional assistance to learn how to write

creative fiction.

He hired Lynda McDaniel, a professional writing coach based in California, who converted him from professional business writing to creative fiction. McDaniel claims on her website to help her clients boost their writing skills so they can write "confidently, effectively, and creatively."

Gildersleeve envisioned a trilogy to come from *Dancing Alone Without Music*, and said he is already working on two other books.

"This is my new career," he said. "When I filled out my passport renewal application, I listed author as my occupation."

Gildersleeve employed Imagewest, an advertising and public relations agency at WKU, to help him with marketing for the novel. Although he published the book through Amazon, he declined its cover art to use a design by Imagewest.

Louisville senior Mercedes Isham, lead account executive at Imagewest, said the agency also worked with Gildersleeve to create social media adver-

tisements and email marketing efforts. Isham said that to her knowledge, this is the first time Imagewest has worked with an author to promote a book.

"It was an exciting learning opportunity for all of the interns involved," Isham said. She added that some of these interns are even mentioned in the book's acknowledgements. Imagewest plans to continue working with Gildersleeve again for his next novel release, the sequel to *Dancing Alone Without Music*.

Gildersleeve said he would advise anyone else with an unreached dream of being a published novelist to seek professional aid, whether it's by taking a creative writing class or hiring a coach.

"If I had done that years ago, I would have started years ago," he said. "Don't assume you can't do it; go learn about it."

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