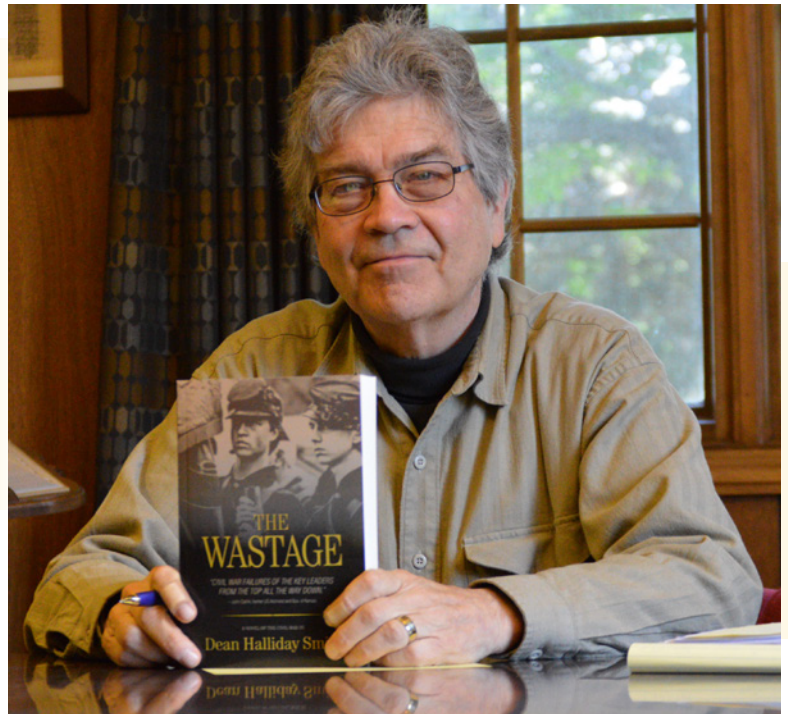


KBA Member Publishes Civil War Novel, "The Wastage"

*"If he makes a stand at Winchester, moving neither North or South, I would fight him there, on the idea that if we can not beat him when he bears **the wastage** of coming to us, we never can when we bear the wastage of going to him."*

Abraham Lincoln, 1862



Author Ron Smith wrote "The Wastage" under the pen name Dean Halliday Smith.

Ron Smith's second book—and first novel—was published in February of this year, and is available for purchase at Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble bookstores.

The title, "The Wastage," comes from a message that President Abraham Lincoln sent to Union General George B. McClellan during the Civil War; Lincoln argued that the Union troops should not be too cautious in fighting the confederates, as the Confederate General Robert E. Lee also fears mass casualties, referred to as "the wastage."

The novel follows many of the historical figures of the time, but especially Henry Villard, a newspaper reporter who wrote for Horace Greeley's New York Tribune. Although Villard was an actual reporter during the civil war, Smith took license with his character and dialogue to move across the battlefield, and see what transpires through Villard's eyes.

"Villard seemed logical," Smith said, "You need somebody who weaves the story, and I'm using him."

"The Wastage" chronicles the Battle of Fredericksburg, which was the Union's Potomac army's Valley Forge. They had to survive that carnage or the army would drift away and the civil war would have been lost," Smith said.

Afterward, several of Lincoln's cabinet and the Republicans in the U. S. Senate—Lincoln's own party—conspired to wrestle the commander in chief position away from the President of the United States, and run the rest of the war as a committee. "Can you imagine running World War II with a congressional committee commanding our armed forces?" Smith said.

How Lincoln handles this historical attempt at a cabal is the highlight of the novel.

Smith began writing "The Wastage," in the late 90s, and worked on it simultaneously with his non-fiction book about Civil War General Thomas Ewing Jr. He writes novels under the pen name "Dean Halliday Smith," a combination of his name and his wife's maiden name, in order to distinguish from many other authors named "Ron Smith."

Smith is a partner at Smith and Burnett, LLC, in Larned, Kan. He previously served on Governor John Carlin's staff from 1979-80, and as general counsel of the Kansas Bar Association from 1985-99. He served in the U.S. Navy as a photojournalist during the Vietnam War.

Smith says his interest in the Civil War stems from his own family's service. Two great-great-grandfathers and five great-great-uncles served in four different Ohio and Iowa regiments in the Union Army.

Smith's grandfather was born in 1896 and lived without indoor running water for nearly all of his life, Smith said. "When grandpa died, my Dad and I went up to clean his apartment, and we ran across three little pocket-sized, leather-bound notebooks, and they were diaries from the Civil War from his grandfather," Smith said.

That discovery spurred Smith to begin writing about the Civil War in 1980.

A hard-hitting no-holds barred novel of the war that created the United States, and the two days in December 1862 when it almost came undone and the Confederacy had its last great opportunity to win the Civil War.

Although Smith's dedication to his legal practice doesn't allow him to write as fast as he would like, he already has plans for his next book.

Smith has started work on his next historical novel, "A Touch of Elbows," about a murder trial in Larned, Kan., that took place in 1888. Just 25 years after the Civil War, a former Union officer defends a former Confederate Colonel who is accused of the murder of a black soldier.

That title comes from a 1904 brigade reunion folder in Ohio and refers to the camaraderie of infantry soldiers who serve together, that "touch of elbows" when advancing in a line of battle. "It's a closeness of the infantry that develops nowhere else but in a war," Smith said.

About the Author



Jennifer H. Salva, journal editor, has a BS in journalism and a BA in film & media studies from The University of Kansas, and is a 1L at Washburn University School of Law. She is passionate about creating meaningful opportunities for those with developmental disabilities and fishing with her dad.

jennifer.salva@washburn.edu

