

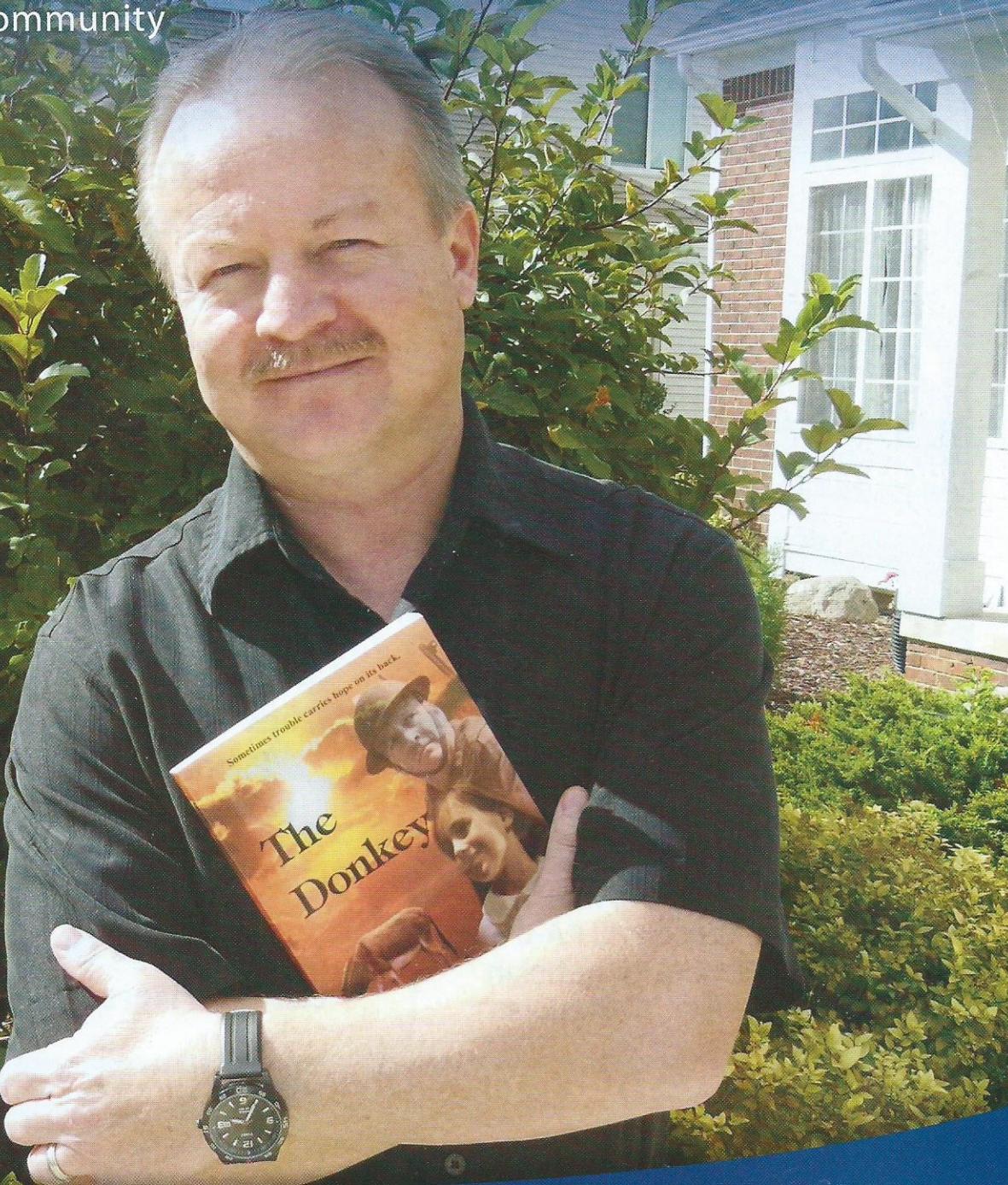
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A Story of Miracles

Author Paul Stuligross Pens a Novel of Hope and Faith

A Novel of Hope and Miracles

Every author will tell you writing is a labor of love. For Paul Stuligross, that hard work is bearing fruit in many ways.

by Mary Griffin
Editor

Most authors write their novel first, praying that it will be published. And then, either the author or a screenwriter will write a screenplay if — and that's a big “if” — there's interest from Hollywood. It didn't work out that way for retired Novi police detective Paul Stuligross. When this relative newcomer set out to write his novel, “The Donkey,” he did it in a roundabout way. He shared his book idea with a childhood friend, Patrick Moug, who happens to be an actor, writer and director. Moug, who owns Buoy 22 Films, suggested Stuligross write a screenplay instead. So that's what he did.

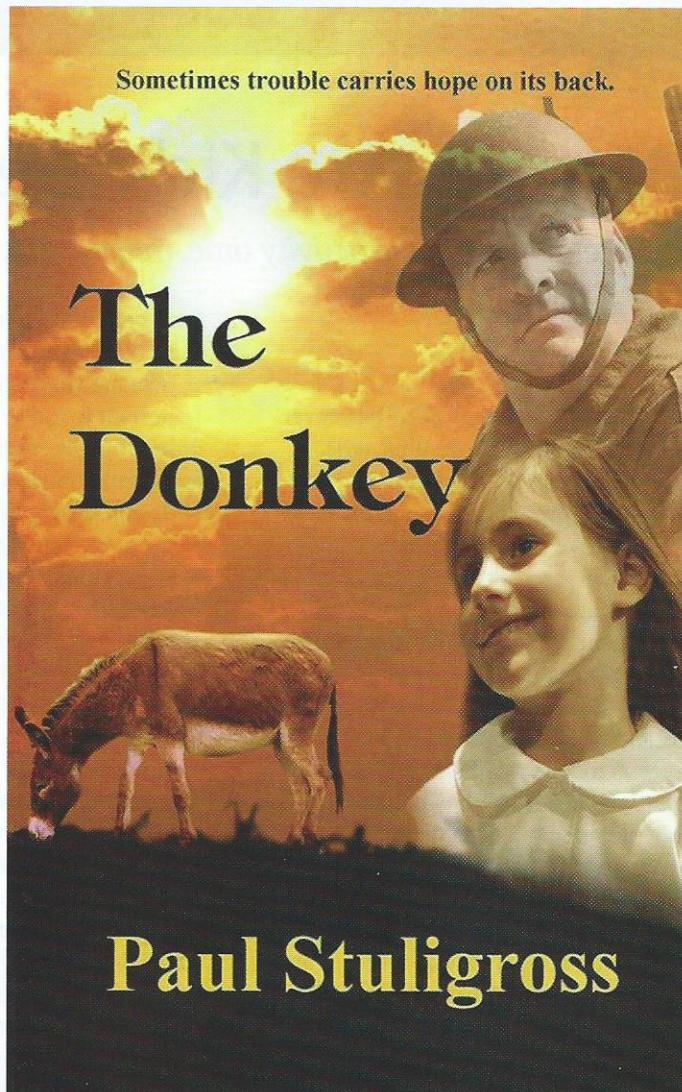
“I wasn't comfortable with it at first,” said Stuligross, whose first novel, “The Birth of an Angel,” was published under the name Paul Stuart. “So I took a class and that was a learning experience. With film being a visual medium, I had to learn how to show and not tell.”

With the completed screenplay in hand, Moug then optioned the screenplay, formed an LLC around the story, and presented it to Hollywood-based Motive Corporation.

Stuligross is hopeful about the screenplay being picked up, but remains realistic.

“That means nothing right now,” said Stuligross. “It means that should Motive like the screenplay, they have the first option to market it. Based on the script, they agreed to make introductions to the likes of Lions Gate distributors if and when the film is made and made to their liking.”

However, Paul Lauer, president of Motive Entertainment gave the screen play rave reviews.



Look for this book jacket when purchasing a copy of “The Donkey.” Author Paul Stuligross said that the soldier portrayed on the cover is his friend and Buoy 22 Films owner Patrick Muog.

Photo courtesy of Patriot Media Inc.

“The Donkey is well written with good dialogue and structure,” he said. “It's a heartwarming feature film that will appeal to both the mainstream and faith-based audiences.”

The process was an exercise in patience for Stuligross, who retired from police work to begin teaching in order to spend more time with his family and to pursue writing.

“I learned a lot about film making that I didn't want to know,” he said modestly.

His introduction to film behind him, he revisited the story — this time as the novel he'd originally planned. The finished screenplay was about 120 pages. He needed to beef it up, add to the story in order for it to be considered for publication.

“It was difficult to work backwards,” said Stuligross. “I didn't want to write the novel heavy and long; I'd lose readers that way.”

The finished novel, while it shares the same rich, complex story, is much more detailed.

“The Donkey”

Stuligross deftly weaves three stories into one in “The Don-



Stuligross with his wife, Jennifer, and their two daughters, Eleyna, 9 and Josephine, 11.

Photo by Mary Griffin

key."

When young Claire's family brought home a donkey from a rural Michigan county fair in 1920, several miraculous events caused her to believe the donkey was a gift from God.

In the meantime, her father, John Sloan, has returned from the front lines of World War I with a heavy heart.

When young Claire's family brought home a donkey from a rural Michigan county fair, several miraculous events caused her to believe the donkey was a gift from God.

"He comes home a different man," said Stuligross of John, who is based on Stuligross' own grandfather, John Stuligross. "He struggles and Claire watches him struggle, but she believes the donkey is the answer to her prayers."

Fast forward many decades to present day and we meet Dan Mertze, a 48-year-old newspaper reporter with the Detroit Free Press, vainly trying to overcome a despairing world view that permeates his writing.

"He's lost hope," said Stuligross. "He sees children dying,

Continued on next page

3 WAYS TO BUY 'THE DONKEY'

- **"The Donkey" by Paul Stuligross**, is already on the market and available for purchase at the suggested retail price of \$17.95
- **Amazon.com offers paperback editions** for \$15.83, and the Kindle edition for \$3.59.
- **Barnesandnoble.com offers the paperback** edition at \$15.51.
- **The book can also** be purchased directly from the publisher by visiting patriotmediainc.com. The publisher is also currently offering a 10 percent discount.
- **Here is what some** readers on Amazon.com are saying about "The Donkey": "This book leaves you speechless. It is a story of faith, hope and proof that anything is possible. It will leave you wanting more." —**Amanda Voto**
- **"Read it non-stop ...** Inspirational, moving and entertaining. If you're looking for a page-turner that will make you feel good, this is it! Couldn't stop thinking about it after either.

—**S. McLaren**

Continued from previous page

fire bombings, all cases absent of redemption of any kind."

Mertze is the "comedic, disheveled guy," said Stuligross, "but he gets lost in his own shtick."

Just as he believes he can't report another horror story coming out of Detroit, his editor assigns him a gentler story, which he reluctantly accepts.

Claire is now a 99-year-old woman whom Mertze is supposed to interview about her religious experiences involving that donkey. After several interviews with her, subtle changes occur in Dan's life as he learns not all troubles are bad, and some are actually blessings.

The story is about hope, said Stuligross.

"There was a story my grandfather told about his experience in World War I that's made it through my entire family. It gave him hope and we need that today, hope and perspective. There's not enough of it," he said. "If you show people hope, they believe it's there."

Stuligross' grandfather, John Stuligross, served in the U.S. Army's 85th Division, 339th Infantry Regiment and was sent to Russia in 1918 during World War I to fight the Bolsheviks. The military veterans of this expeditionary force became officially known as Polar Bears.

While the story has an obvious message, Stuligross said he doesn't like "preachy" stories.

"I like to write a story and let the reader decide for themselves," he said. "There are enough elements of doubt, so that people who want to believe (in miracles) will believe. Those who don't want to believe don't have to. At least the little girl believes, and the strength of her childlike belief is contagious."

The creative process

"The Donkey" is Stuligross' second novel; his first was self published.

He shopped his manuscript to six or seven publishers and got a response from Patriot Media Inc.

The book was proposed and accepted in April 2013, "I think because it already had film rights attached to it," said Stuligross. With the manuscript submitted and accepted, the hard work, as far as Stuligross was concerned, began: the editing process.

When Stuligross' editor, Dari Bradley, told him that the



John Sloan was inspired by John Stuligross (rear, middle) who served in the U.S. Army's 85th Division, 339th Infantry Regiment and was sent to Russia in 1918 during World War I to fight the Bolsheviks.

Photo courtesy of Paul Stuligross

manuscript was nowhere near ready for print, he said he panicked.

"If you were to break down the story by hours, I spent much more time in the editing process," he said. "I was thinking that three or four passes through revisions was enough. It wasn't. It was more like seven or eight times."

He added that he was involved through the entire process, "up to the last edits. I sat for 10 straight hours and went through it again, and I had seven pages of changes."

Lessons learned

The editing process reinforced what Stuligross learned in creative writing coursework he'd taken, and it taught him a few other things, too.

"I like to write a story and let the reader decide for themselves."

Paul Stuligross, author

"My editor told me to cut the adjectives from my manuscript," he said. "They were getting in the way of the story. Again, I had to learn how to show and not tell, and I wanted the

Rural Michigan

1920

In "The Donkey," we learn that sometimes trouble carries hope on its back. Do miracles exist? You decide.



More About The Author

Paul Stuligross is a family man with a past career as a detective and now teaches when he's not writing.

Detective, theology teacher, and writer

Paul Stuligross spent 24 years as a Novi police officer, several of which were as a detective. During his career he received the Officer of the Year award for his involvement in developing and implementing a comprehensive chaplain's program for his police department.

His education includes behavioral and psychological profiling, as well as hours of training in creative arts screen writing. He received his master of arts in theological and pastoral studies at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit in 2012.

Stuligross' first novel, "The Birth of an Angel," was written under the pseudonym of Paul J. Stuart. He authored the film script of "The Donkey," which is slated for a motion picture by Detroit-based Buoy 22 Films.

The screenplay received positive reviews by Hollywood's Motive Corporation, whose marketing campaign contributed to the success of such films as "The Chronicles of Narnia," "Rocky Balboa," and "The Passion of the Christ."

Stuligross currently writes for the Michigan Catholic newspaper. He is a member of the Police Officer Writers Association, American Christian Writers Association, American Society of Authors and Writers, and the Catholic Writers Guild.

Family man

He currently teaches theology at Ladywood High School in Livonia. He is married to Jennifer, and they have two daughters, Eleyna and Josephine.

Stuligross does have plans for future novels, but his first vocation is to his family.

"I don't want my passion to get in the way of life with my kids," he said. "If an idea is something I think I can do, I'll take it on, but it's a long process."

To learn more

Keep yourself updated on information about "The Donkey," book signing events and more on Stuligross' Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/TheDonkey-Novel>. He also has a website, stuligross.com.

For more information about "The Donkey," or any other books published by Patriot Media, visit patriotmediainc.com.

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