

Connections eMagazine

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TERROR LIBRARY IN THE

30 Years ago, a madman with a gun and a bomb stormed the Salt Lake City Library and took a room full of hostages. Captain Lloyd Prescott (Retired) risked his life to stop the terror.

Exclusive interviews with critically acclaimed authors Dan Flanagan, Gretchen McCullough, Katherine Hayes, Nir Yaniv, and S. Atzeni

*For those who love to read and the
Authors who make it possible*

2024 | Quarter 1



Dan Flanigan is a novelist, playwright, poet, and practicing lawyer. He holds a Ph.D. in History from Rice University and J.D. from the University of Houston. He taught Jurisprudence at the University of Houston and American Legal History at the University of Virginia. His first published book was his Ph.D. dissertation.

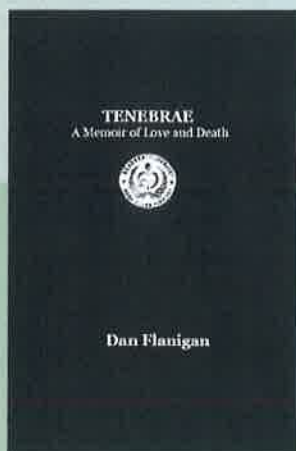
[The Criminal Law of Slavery and Freedom, 1800-1868.](#)

Dan Flanigan

He moved on from academia to serve the civil rights cause as a school desegregation lawyer, followed by a long career as a finance attorney in private law practice. He became a named partner in the Polsinelli law firm in Kansas City, created its Financial Services practice, chaired its Real Estate & Financial Services Department for two decades, and established the firm's New York City office and served as its managing partner until October 2022. His legal bio may be viewed at <https://www.polsinelli.com/dan-flanigan>.

Taking a break from the law practice for two years, he and his wife, Candy, founded Sierra Tucson, a prominent alcohol and drug treatment center located in Tucson, Arizona.

Recently, he has been able to turn his attention to his lifelong ambition—creative writing. In 2019 he released a literary trifecta including [Mink Eyes](#), the first in the Peter O'Keefe series, [Dewdrops](#), a collection of shorter fiction, and [Tenebrae: A Memoir of Love and Death](#).



[Tenebrae](#) is a bracelet of verse and prose poems dedicated to his wife, Candy, to honor her last illness and death and their 40-plus years together, a work that has been described as “celebratory” and “heartbreaking and exquisite.” It was a Finalist for both the 2022 IAN Book of the Year in Poetry and in the 2022 American Book Fest “Best Book” Award in the Legacy: Autobiography/Memoir category.

Mink Eyes – The Peter O’Keefe series is born amid a mink farm, the mafia, and a brutal shootout in the desert.

The Big Tilt, the award-winning second book in the Peter O’Keefe series, was published in 2020 and has been described as “deft, hard-boiled, but literary prose that’s reminiscent of Raymond Chandler’s best work.” The Big Tilt won the 2022 National Indie Excellence Award for Crime Fiction and was a Finalist for the 2022 Independent Author Network’s Book of the Year in Thriller/Suspense. In 2023, The Big Tilt, was awarded the Honorable Mention in the prestigious Eric Hoffer Awards in the Legacy Fiction category, which included hundreds of books across all fiction genres.

On Lonesome Roads, published April 26, 2022, is the third book in the series, and was a Notable 100 Book in the 2022 Shelf Unbound Best Indie Book Competition and 2023 Silver Medalist in the Best Mystery/Thriller eBook category. Most notably, On Lonesome Roads followed up The Big Tilt’s 2022 NIEA Crime Fiction win with a finish as Finalist in the same contest and category for 2023. In the 2023 American Fiction Awards, On Lonesome Roads, finished with a virtual sweep: winner for Mystery/Suspense: General, finalist for Mystery/Suspense: Hard-Boiled Crime and finalist for Thriller: Crime.

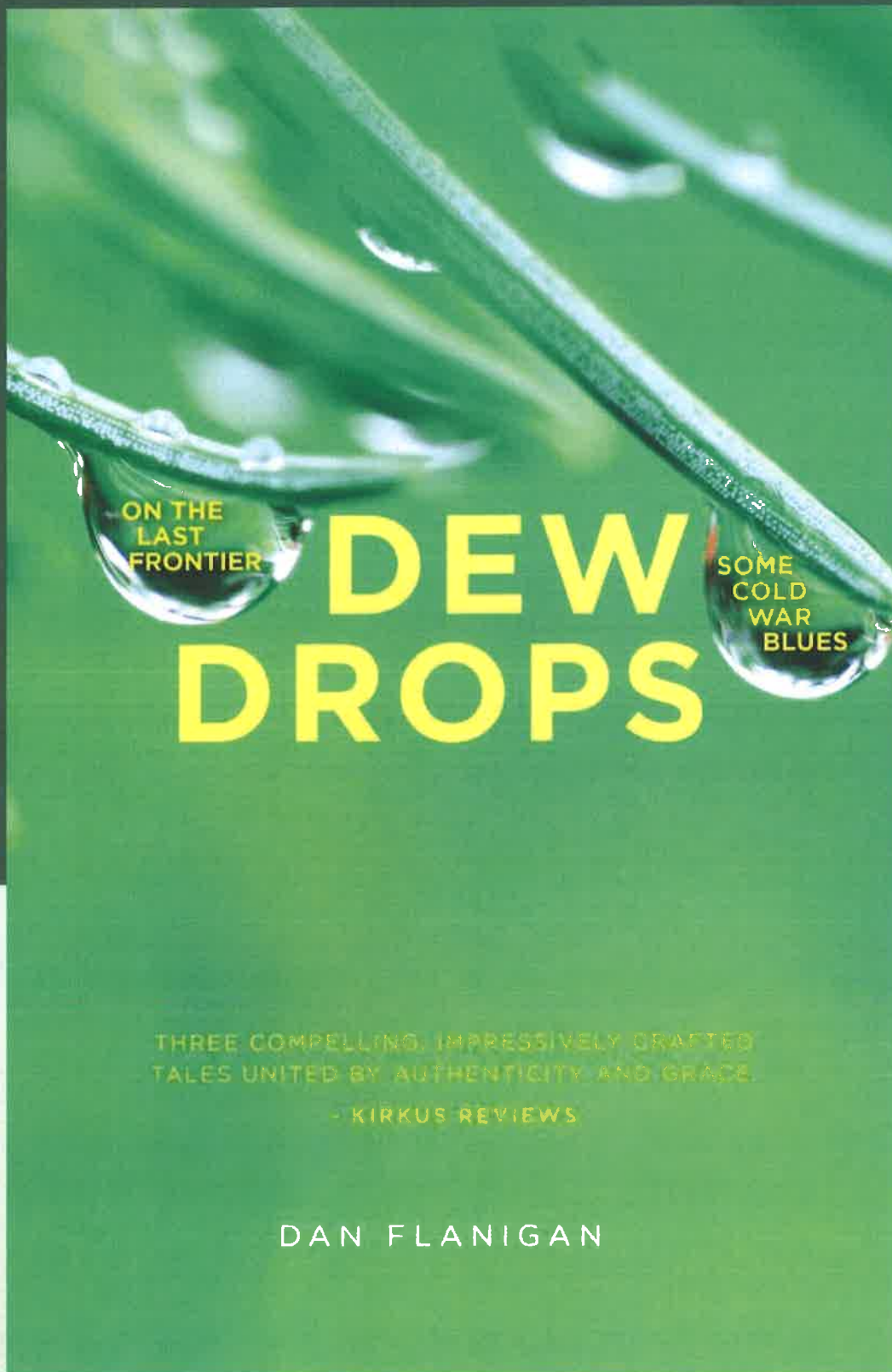


Peter O'Keefe Series

Interview by
Melanie P. Smith

He has also written stage plays including Secrets (based on the life of Eleanor Marx) and Moondog's Progress (inspired by the life of Alan Freed), which was awarded Honorable Mention in 2022 in the 91st Annual Writer's Digest Writing Competition for "Script."

<https://danflaniganbooks.com/>



ON THE
LAST
FRONTIER

DEW DROPS

SOME
COLD
WAR
BLUES

THREE COMPELLING, IMPRESSIVELY GRAFTED
TALES UNITED BY AUTHENTICITY AND GRACE.

- KIRKUS REVIEWS

DAN FLANIGAN

Dan's novella, Dewdrops, was originally written for the stage and enjoyed a full-cast staged reading at the Theatre of the Open Eye in New York. The short story collection was a Finalist in the 2022 Independent Author Network's Book of the Year for Short Story Collection and a 2022 American Book Fest "Best Book" Award Finalist in Fiction-Short Story.

Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I am at the end of a long career in the law and now able to devote myself to what I have wanted to do all my life, creative writing, and in the last several years have published five books and getting the sixth ready for publication. I was born and raised in Kansas City and though I have moved around some (Houston, Charlottesville, Tucson, and New York City), I do always end up back here. I am widowed and have a daughter and two grandchildren.

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@danflaniganbooks/
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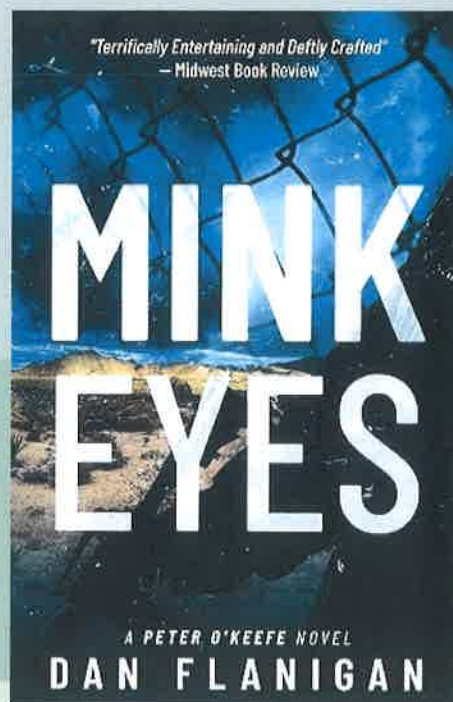
He serves on the Board of Directors of Childhood USA, the U.S. arm of the World Childhood Foundation, established by Queen Silvia of Sweden, working to end child sexual abuse and exploitation everywhere.

He divides his time among Kansas City, New York City, and Los Angeles, and when possible, visits the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington state and Vancouver and Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

<https://bookgoodies.com/a/B07PHH7KDR>

Are you a multi-genre author or a single-genre author? How did you decide what types of book you would write?

I am multi-genre and the type of book depends on what I have to say. My first book, *Tenebrae: A Memoir of Love and Death*, which focused on the last illness and death of my wife of 40-plus years, was most appropriately expressed as poetry. My second book, *Dewdrops*, a collection of a novella and two short stories, were what is so-called “literary” fiction though I don’t accept that category generally. Which leads me to what I have been focusing mostly on the last few years, a mystery/crime/detective series, which are not written with any intention of writing “crime/mystery/detective” tropes but as “literary” fictions that might just be a little more engaging from a plot perspective than many other “literary” fictions.



If you write in multiple genres, do you have a favorite, or is one type of book easier for you to write than others, and why?

Well, I began writing plays, and I feel I am best at that (dialogue), and it is my favorite medium, but, though I had early-on a full-scale staged reading of one of my plays in NYC, it's just too hard to get your work in front of audiences in that medium. Lately, I have focused my efforts on three published novels, and a fourth one ready for publication, in some version of the crime/detective/mystery/thriller genre or genres. This series begins in 1986, focusing on the main character Peter O'Keefe and a cast of characters in his orbit (new ones being added all the time) that will bring all of them through the transformations, schemes, scams, and scandals in American life up to the present (or at least as close to then as my energy, mental powers, and lifespan will permit (however, it's the fourth book now and I'm still in 1988!).

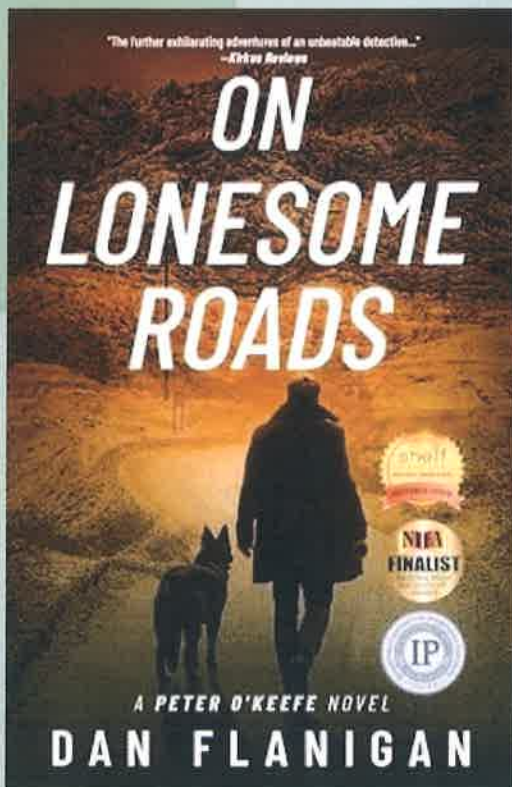
When did you start writing? Did an event or person prompt you to take that leap?

I have wanted to be a writer since high school. It turned out that, on the one hand, I wasn't ready to undertake it seriously for most of my life, but on the other, the drive never left me and I am now exceedingly grateful that I've eventually gotten there. Although I was frustrated for decades by my failure to pursue it, now it seems that it really was best to wait. I unnecessarily suffered a lot, and most unfortunately caused my wife also to suffer too much, over my failure to get it going earlier.

How / where do you find the plots you write about?

The poetry book is "real life" and the three shorter pieces in Dewdrops all come from people, situations, or characters that, while remaining fictional, originated in "real life" circumstances. The O'Keefe novels are much more "imaginative"—although they are rooted in real aspects of the American situation in their time (e.g. the old-time mafia and its decline, the S&L financial debacle and scandal of the 1980s and 1990s, the Satanic/Moral Panic of the 1980s/1990s), the characters, situations, and plot developments are painstakingly (sometimes too painstakingly) birthed and developed, the painstaking caused mostly by wanting to be scrupulously true to the real world as it was and is.





Mark Twain said, “Write what you know.” Tell us about your writing process. Are you a plotter or a pantser? Do you plot, plan, and conduct hours of research; or, do you just sit down and write whatever comes to mind based on your personal history and knowledge?

I start with a very rough outline and it’s pants from then on including hitting blank walls and going down various ends that turn out to be dead ends and having to regroup a bit. Sometimes, when stuck, I just start with a thread and see where it goes. So far, I have done a lot of research, both up front and as I am writing. Even though I lived through those times, my memory isn’t perfect, and I didn’t live through everything and want to make sure I make as few mistakes as possible in writing what are essentially “historical” novels. As we all know, those were times of rapid technological change, and it takes some work to make sure I don’t have people, for example, emailing or voice mailing before those things existed.

Is there a message in your novel that you want readers to grasp?

My writing, like most writing, is about characters struggling to overcome challenges, whether created inside of them or outside and often both. Themes running through the books are addiction and recovery, the misuse of all kinds of power (legal, political, financial, gender-based, familial), sin and redemption (in a secular sense), love and the lack of it, responsibility, duty, Tikkun Olam (repairing/healing the world in whatever way, large or small, that is reasonably and practically within one’s capability). The main character in the O’Keefe books is, as he says, trying to become a “useful person.”



Tell us your latest news.

The fourth installment in the Peter O’Keefe series is finished and will be available by this summer. While all the books connect, they also stand alone, especially the new (fourth) one. I have been lucky enough to win some awards, which are described on my website <https://danflaniganbooks.com>.

How much of the book is realistic?

If it's not realistic, I don't write it, or at least try not to. It can be difficult to create suspense, excitement, etc. but still keep it real. This is a big challenge for me but one I take very seriously, maybe too seriously.

What books have influenced your life the most?

Don't laugh, I don't pretend to be in their league, but: Dante, Shakespeare, early Wordsworth, Dickens, Turgenev (*Fathers and Sons*), Joyce (especially *Dubliners*), Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*), Faulkner, Joseph Campbell's work (*Hero with a Thousand Faces* and many others), the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm sure I am missing some major ones. More recent: *Dog Soldiers* by Robert Stone, E. L. Doctorow's *Book of Daniel*, *Ragtime*, *Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, the play *Chorus Line*, less than you might imagine since they are in my "genre," but Ross MacDonald, Raymond Chandler, and Elmore Leonard showed me that you could do something interesting and serious in that genre.

Do you have a mentor that helped or encouraged you to follow your dream of writing?

Father Wilfred Fangman [not a snake], high school English teacher. Matthew Lippman, from whom I took a poetry class as I was writing *Tenebrae*. (I am so afraid I am not remembering important people here.)

What are your current projects?

Finishing the latest O'Keefe novel, fourth in the series, tentatively titled *An American Tragedy*. Revising my play *Secrets* based on the life of Eleanor Marx, Karl Marx's youngest daughter. Scrounging around for the next O'Keefe plot, and if I can't get going on that, a short memoir based on my recovery from alcoholism and the founding by my wife Candy and I of Sierra Tucson, an internationally known drug and alcohol treatment center in Tucson, Arizona.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

I mostly welcome and enjoy hearing comments and thoughts, including even most criticism, on my books or the "musings" (I call them blog posts, but they are more like quips) that I post too infrequently on my website. You can post in the comments section on my website, or you can email me at danflaniganbooks@gmail.com (my hero O'Keefe will hunt down and do harm to all trolls). If you like the books, please post reviews.



<https://www.facebook.com/AuthorDanFlanigan>

https://twitter.com/_DanFlanigan

Is there one person past or present you would like to meet and why?

The question is too hard. I will lamely offer Shakespeare.

Pick one of your characters and share some of their backstory that didn't make it into the novel.

Hmm. Sara Slade started as O'Keefe's secretary and her ambition, energy, and penchant for sometimes foolish risk-taking earned her a detective position in the little agency and now even a partnership. Her backstory is a mystery and there is an unstated but real gentlewoman/man's agreement not to pry in to it. I will be telling everyone her secret once I know what it is, but she deserves a blockbuster and one of sufficient quality hasn't revealed itself to me yet.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

While I get irritated with everyone talking about how "humble" they feel about this and that, I feel very hesitant and humble about giving such advice. I can only say (1) it's never too late, (2) consider seriously all that the professional writing advisors have to say but in the end follow your own instincts, (3) get over that horrifying risk of indifference or even rejection and publish, (4) if you believe in your work, don't let the gatekeepers stop you, self-publish, (5) quit if it's too much suffering, but if you believe in your work and it's not costing you too much of whatever else in life you value—persist, persist, persist.

What do you want written on your headstone and why?

There is writing already on a headstone where I will involuntarily "rest." (It is weird to see your own name on a headstone, waiting for the second date to be entered.) When my wife died, I ordered a large headstone that would work for both of us. My daughter suggested I engrave on it what I had engraved on my wife's wedding band in 1969. "The One of Us." That's plenty, but I will also say I was very impressed by the writing on a headstone on a tombstone in the small graveyard behind Trinity Church in New York City of a young man who died of some fever or contagious disease: "He died in the midst of his usefulness."



Other than writing do you have any hobbies?

I have long loved to kayak and canoe, and many both family and solo trips throughout my life have centered around them. I find kayaking preferable now, more stable and enjoyable, as we have had a few harrowing (actually life threatening) moments in canoes over the years. Whales (orcas, humpbacks especially) are of great interest, and I am a financial and other supporter of efforts to advance the interests of these endangered beings. I seek out careful and respectful opportunities to see them in their habitat. There are many outfits that work very hard to not disrupt or harm them or their way of life as much as possible. I have played tennis on and off since I was younger but lately have really dived in and am endeavoring to become the best “old guy” tennis player that I can be. I follow college basketball closely though the roller coaster of emotion can become overwhelming. With that being said, Rock Chalk Jayhawk.

Can you share something personal with your readers? Do you have any holiday traditions? What kind of music do you enjoy? What kind of movies do you prefer? Do you have a favorite author?

My best (perhaps only) holiday tradition is that my daughter and I go out to lunch and shopping on Christmas Eve Day. This started when she was 8 and her mother needed some extra time to prepare for the holiday. We are still doing it 38 years later. I think we only missed one year in all this time.

Music: Bach, Handel, sacred choral music of all kinds, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, much else (this would be a very long list.) **Movies:** Favorites include Cinema Paradiso, Lost in America, Blade Runner, The Big Lebowski, Young Frankenstein, Z, Alien, Kenneth Branagh’s Henry V, Breaker Morant, Amelie. **Favorite Author:** Shakespeare, followed closely by Dickens.

If money was no issue would you prefer a cozy beach bungalow or a rustic cabin overlooking a mountain lake?

Rustic cabin overlooking a mountain lake (river would be much better), But too cold or too much snow and I’m heading for that beach, or better, lower altitude in the forest.



One final question...Do you have a blog/website? If so, what is it? Do you have a social media platform where your fans can go to interact with you and follow your progress?

My website is <https://danflaniganbooks.com>. Other social media is a work in progress. I do send out a newsletter occasionally; people can sign up to receive it through the contact page on my website or send an email request and we will add you.