

NH Writer Finds a Perfect Recipe for Writing

New Hampshire INK *Nancy Bean Foster*

This is one in an occasional series profiling Granite State authors.

MONT VERNON — Though cooking was Jason Bellipanni's first career choice, the urge to put pen to paper and share the stories being told in his head pestered him, so he began his journey to become a writer.

With an MA in English from the University of Colorado, a fellowship to the Vermont Studio Center and an MFA from the University of Southern Maine, Bellipanni is not only writing up a storm, but inspiring other would-be writers. He has written text books on writing and teaches writing classes at Southern New Hampshire University and St. Anselm College. An avid rower, husband and father of two, Bellipanni has just published his first work of fiction called "Slippery Devils," a collection of short stories.



NBF: When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

JB: I knew in 1983 in the sixth grade, the same year I stitched a Reebok label onto my generic sneakers. I wrote a long story on a legal yellow pad entitled "The Stowaways." A girl in my class had also written a story. She told me she was going to be a writer.

It was the first time I'd ever heard of the possibility.

I decided on Jan. 1, 1995. I was in Florence, at the Institute of Culinary Art Cordon Bleu. I had traveled a long way, enrolled in culinary school and figured out that I was "saving" writing the way a kid saves a dessert for later. Like it was my secret identity, the thing I was really going to do with my life but, for

some reason I'd wanted to keep it hidden. So I declared my intentions at my little desk in the little apartment I was in.

You probably read about it in the Times.

NBF: Your background is in culinary arts. Why the change?

JB: My interest in culinary arts grew out of my connection and affection for Italy and the family I visited in Sicily. My desire to be around Italians and Italian food led to a job at Caffè Antica Roma in Boulder, Colo. The two processes are complementary, so I never felt like I gave up one for the other. But I did give up on the restaurant career because I could no longer handle the stress in that world.

NBF: Has your cooking experience impacted your writing in any way?

JB: I think of cooking as sort of the physical version of writing.

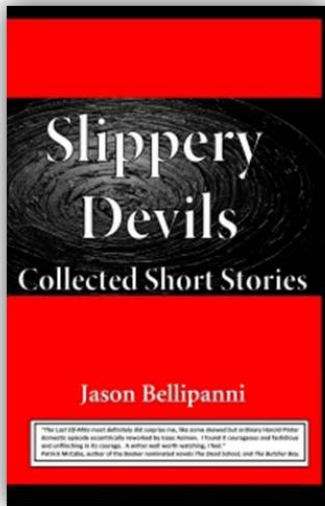
If it was possible to watch someone writing, I imagine it would be like watching someone cook — the metaphor seems to hold all the way to the flat waffles that are the consistency of Frisbees because you forgot to put in baking powder. I can't count the number of stories I've written that needed baking powder.

NBF: Is your process for writing fiction different from writing text books?

JB: The main difference is that the wheel in my head that turns in the background when I write is trying to come up with writing activities that will demonstrate a certain idea. When I'm writing fiction, the wheel is just turning up "what happens next" possibilities.

NBF: Is there a common theme among the stories in "Slippery Devils?"

JB: For a few years, I've used a number of the stories in an experimental literature course that explores absurdist, surrealist, meta and science fiction. The themes basically represent the story's style. For example, the absurdist stories tend to deal with ideas of futility and control, the surrealist fiction focuses on repressed emotion and desire, and metafiction tries to achieve an effect by making the reader aware of the role they play in giving a story meaning.



NBF: Where did the title come from?

JB: The phrase "Slippery Devils" is meant to suggest two of the main characteristics of stories.

It is what a story would be if it was a physical thing; a vaguely threatening creature that is difficult to catch, more difficult to keep and probably impossible to figure out.

NBF: What's next for Jason Bellipanni?

JB: I'm completing the first book in a trilogy of upmarket literary fiction about the elixir of immortality, synthetic souls and the collapse of the human race. The book is entitled "The History of Yellow Blood."

For more information visit storyreviewpress.com/press/ or jasonbellipanni.com.

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