

Harry Hunsicker

The Next Time You Die

A Lee Henry Oswald Mystery

Few books hit so close to home.

The Next Time You Die, by Harry Hunsicker, steers readers through Dallas on a hunt for a missing file. Our private detective is Lee Henry Oswald. You may remember him from Hunsicker's first novel, *Still River*, but if you don't, no worries, he's an easy-going sleuth, just don't make fun of his name.

When a beer-guzzling Baptist preacher hires Oswald (Hank) to find the missing file, an out-of-town hit man drops into Dallas wanting the same file. Meanwhile, the state senator appoints Hank to keep an eye out for his goddaughter, Tess McPherson, a wanton woman in her late twenties.

What's the connection between the two cases? A dead man named Billy Barringer. What's the missing file? Hunsicker leaves you guessing until the end. It appears though that the dead man's family has teamed up with the new hit man.

The book is a fast-read, not vacuous, but compelling. One-liners, mostly from Hank, are swift punches of humor. Sometimes Hank is the punching bag, donning a name similar to Dallas' most infamous assassin.

"I wanted a name that was tied to the area," says Hunsicker. "For awhile I toyed with writing about a hit man named Tom Landry but I was afraid they'd run me out of town," he laughs. "I thought about some play-on with J.R. Ewing but

I didn't want to do that, and then I thought well, why not? Let's have a guy named Lee Henry Oswald."

Hunsicker's characters are a compilation of different people, friends or acquaintances, but most of the venues and street names in *The Next Time You Die* are real.

To the author, keeping the characters fresh is a challenge when writing a series. "The readers build a relationship with the characters. They want them the same but they also want something new," he says. "You want to keep the characters growing from book to book."

For example in *The Next Time You Die*, Hank experiences what Hunsicker calls a "crisis of conscience." He is forced to examine how his past has made him who he is.

Hank's dilemma embodies the book's theme: Do you make you, you, or are you a product of your environment? "The question is fun to explore; it was for me fictionally," says Hunsicker. "I mean if you were raised to be a criminal, would you be one? Do you have a choice? Obviously you have a choice," he resolves.

Hunsicker doesn't begin a mystery novel blindfolded; he plots and predetermines the end. "There's no



Profile photo

Author Harry Hunsicker is a fourth generation Dallasite, so setting his mysteries in Big D was a natural.

formula [for writing mystery novels]. There are conventions and one of them is you can't just say here's a mystery, and never solve it. It's OK to leave readers guessing but if you've

given them pieces of a puzzle, you've got to at least say here's how they fit."

It's fitting that Dallas is the setting for Hunsicker's novels as the author represents the fourth generation of his family to call Dallas home. When he's not teaching a creative writing class at Southern Methodist University, attending book signings, library events, or his writer's group, Hunsicker is a full-time commercial real estate appraiser.

The Baylor University graduate is also a member of the Writers League of Texas, International Thriller Writers, Mystery Writers of America, and Private Eye Writers of America.

How does he find the time to write? "I don't know. I work seven days a week," he says, and his wife Alison is "extremely supportive." Eloquently, the author quotes Maya Angelou: I fit the writing on 'the fringes of the day.'"

Hunsicker's third book in the Lee Henry Oswald series, *Cross Hairs*, will be available in the summer of 2007. And according to the author, Hank will be

steering readers through Plano.

For more information, visit www.harryhunsicker.com.

Excerpt from pages 63 - 64

I opened my eyes because I couldn't breathe.

Drowning in a room full of air. Diaphragm mangled around my spleen. Lungs struggling. Mouth wheezing. I looked up and saw Bullet Head in the corner of the elevator. He had Nolan's throat squeezed in the crook of his elbow. She was bleeding from her head and cut lip. ... She fought until he increased pressure on her throat and her eyes started to bug out.

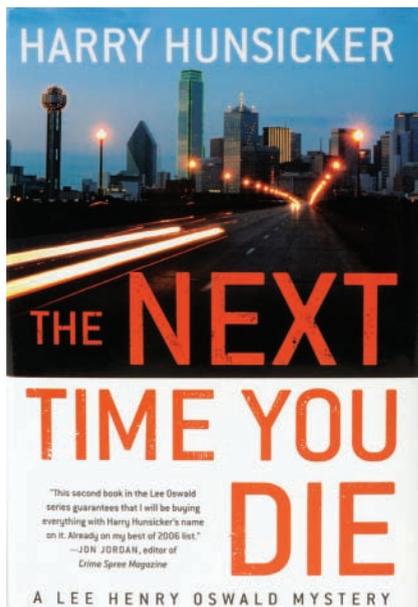
"Retribution is nigh upon you, Mr. Oswald." His voice had a singsong quality to it. His skin glistened with perspiration.

He smiled and kicked my kneecap. I screamed and curled into a ball.

I barely heard him speak over the din of my pain. He said, "Three of my men paid a visit to your fudge-packing gun dealer today. Can't find any of 'em now. ..."

"Your guys aren't that good then." I spoke through clenched teeth. "Look for them south of the border." I braced for another blow.

Bullet Head laughed as if I were Stand-Up Comic of the Year. "Billy used to tell me you was a tough guy. He wasn't fooling, no sir."



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