

An Interview with...

Dale B. Mattheis

**Didn't you start writing pretty late in life?**

What's late? I could not have written these books at an earlier age—the characters in *The Alarai Chronicles* series have life. They cry and laugh and know sorrow, and the reader will be with them through it all. I never could have captured this full sense of life had I written earlier. It isn't pretty sometimes, but it takes life experience to write effectively.

**You speak as if these characters are real people.**

How do I put this? All I can say is that, at times, they were, and are, more real than anyone around me in the perceived world. To me, these “characters” came to life and after a period began to write the story for me. Sometimes, late at night when I was working on illustrating what they might look like, they became very real. Funny things happen late at night.

**Can you give me an example of a character writing the story?**

In the third book in the series, I ran across a young woman no more than 16 or 17 years of age far south in the land of Zomar. She was really screwed up. Through a series of events Kira escapes a terrible life. I watched her blossom into an outgoing, loving creature that dominated every page until I had to put my foot down. Her energy was overwhelming.

**So, how did it happen that you sat down to write fiction?**

I had been struggling to keep a wholesale baking company alive for some years. Finally, the pressures became so great that I threw in the towel and decided I was done with doing. For good.

Things were hard, but I holed up in a very old trailer and sat down to see if there was any creativity left in my soul. Two years and three books later I took a breath and decided I had better see what I could do with them. That began a period of over five years of trying to find a publisher or a way to publish.



**Sounds like you had the usual new author experience.**

In spades. It's a tough industry to break into. Still, like I said earlier, the school of hard knocks pays off eventually.

**Pays off how? Ardent Publishing?**

That's it. Never would have started Ardent, though, after my experiences with a small company if I had not matured. It was still hard, but the first round of publishing effort knocked a few remaining rough edges off, and now it's time to move out.

**When will the paperback version of *Exile to the Stars* be available to the public?**

The publication date is May of 2008. It's exciting. Interest is beginning to build, and I've run across some folks who are really giving me a boost. It's great to know you have people on the team who can get the job done.

**Sounds like you've given up on your decision to be “done with doing”.**

Yeah! Funny how things work out.

**Any regrets for all the years spent trying to get this project off the ground? You've been at it for over twelve years.**

None. I cherish those years spent in that old trailer. Just me and the word processor. Nothing else mattered except my kids. That may not happen again.