

Reader Views

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Interview with Dennis Edwards

Author of *The Caduceus: A Water Chronicle Featuring Dr. Francis Allenton*

Reader Views is happy to chat with Dennis Edwards. In his recent novel he has the reader realizing that “water” could be the “oil” of the next 100 years, an issue too real to be fiction. Welcome to Reader Views Dennis.

Juanita: You have written a very thought provoking and intriguing novel. It weaves a fictional tale around current environmental/political/social issues. What inspired you to write “The Caduceus”?

Dennis: First, I am fascinated by a small town in northern Arkansas called Eureka Springs that has 62 identified springs. Starting in the late 1800’s, people from all over flocked to the area for healing. One day during my visit to Eureka Springs, The Caduceus was “hatched” when five water issues that I had been mulling over came together in story form: (1) the world’s declining water supplies; (2) the government’s current method of supplying the military with water in Iraq--bottled water; (3) the stories I continued to hear of healing using Eureka’s spring water; (4) a conspiracy that I perceived was developing around the enormous profits by water bottling companies enhanced by a worldwide lack of regulation of that industry; and (5) the legends that surround the Caduceus as a symbol and as an ancient healing device.

Juanita: Please tell us what exactly a Caduceus is and how it is used in your book.

Dennis: A Caduceus is one or two snakes wound around some type of rod. It is both an ancient symbol for healing and a healing device. Many branches of the medical profession use the Caduceus as their symbol. In my book the main character, Francis Allenton, a water scientist, builds a large Caduceus modeled after an artifact he had been allowed to view in Greece. He believes that his working Caduceus will enhance the healing properties of water drawn from a secret spring.

Juanita: The idea of the Caduceus being used as a healing device is very fascinating. Where did this idea come from?

Dennis: Many sources: Greek legend tells of Asclepius, the father of medicine, using his staff to rescue a snake in mortal combat with another. Grateful, the snake climbs his staff and tells him the secrets of healing. The Romans had the staff of Hermes that had two snakes instead of one. Biblical history relates Moses commanded by God to “build thee a fiery serpent and all those who touch it shall be healed.” This was interpreted as a serpent of brass or copper fashioned around Moses’ staff and possessing healing properties. The Caduceus was worshipped for hundreds of years following the Exodus. Another source goes back even further and says that the Caduceus was a hieroglyph for an interstellar traveler who seeded the universe with life. Some note that the double helix design of the Caduceus mimics the DNA molecule. Additionally, in a lab setting, a Caduceus coil with copper wound around a ferrite core and energized has produced strange properties.

Juanita: Dennis, you have a passionate commitment to natural resources. Why do you think our water supply is one of the front running issues we will be dealing with in the years to come? And, is there any chance of stopping the exploitation of our natural waters?

Dennis: If you compare international oil and water profits, water already earns 40% as much as petroleum. The scarcity of clean water is a serious issue. World wide changes in climate and alterations in drinking water supplies impact all nations. As any thing essential for life becomes scarce, there are those who will profit from that scarcity. Men have known for a long time the value of water or as Benjamin Franklin once said, “We know the worth of water when the well is dry.”

Juanita: With the obvious climate and environmental changes that are occurring, much fear is being created surrounding these issues. Do you think any of these changes could be intently created to induce fear in the public so a carefully crafted solution can be offered?

Dennis: Looking back over the past decade, it is certainly credible that people have been manipulated to buy bottled water and not to trust their local water supply. Bottled water has created a vast sea of cast-off plastic containers and disposal concerns. In reality, most municipal water supplies are more regulated than bottled waters.

Juanita: Water is a hot topic issue here in the United States. Are other parts of the world confronting these same problems?

Dennis: About six months ago Paris, France, was in the news when the city government initiated a public relations campaign reassuring the citizens that their tap water was safe contrary to the publicized advertising by water bottlers that it was somehow unsafe. Developing countries, including many in Africa, are having tremendous difficulties obtaining clean water. Multinational concerns have bought well rights and are pumping wells dry to make soft drinks and bottle water. The indigenous people are losing water supplies to these companies and cannot grow crops or water stock. The era of free water is quickly coming to an end.

Juanita: It is incredible that the bottled water industry has gone so long without addressing issues regarding protecting the environment. From disposal concerns to depleting our water supplies, the problems seem endless. Where can your readers get

more information on these issues? And, please give suggestions of what we can do right now to make a difference?

Dennis: Readers can find shocking statistics on the state of world and U. S. water interest at the Earth Policy Institute (www.earth-policy.org). People are paying 1,364% more for water than it costs to make and bottle. Presently a gallon of premium water costs more than a gallon of premium gas. National Resource Defense Council studies found many bottled waters to have significant contamination. The International Council on Bottled Water Association (www.icbwa.org) provides statistics on world wide use.

Some suggestions for immediate action: advocating for alterations in the type of plastic used for bottled water might make some difference as the present containers are not designed for reuse. Improving consumer awareness would also educate the public when making water purchases. The differences between spring water, filtered water, mineral water and sports enhanced water are vague and in some instances hard to determine. When possible, drink water from your tap. It is likely more regulated and pure than bottled water. When dining out, request your server not to bring water to the table unless you intend to drink it. Millions of gallons of clean water are poured down sinks day after day in eating establishments. Many states in the U.S. Southwest have instituted water conservation policies and programs that have excellent guidelines for protecting our water resources.

Juanita: The characters in your book find out that the water cartel is actually misusing Dr. Allenton's research by altering water to induce violent aggression. How real is the threat of water weaponization and how concerned should we be?

Dennis: Studies have already been conducted abroad placing trace minerals in the water of prisoners to alter moods. In the past, the U.S. military has experimented on enlisted men with mind/mood altering substances. Historically, we can see that any scarce resource is an impetus for conflict and there are people ready to profit from that scarcity. Just consider that the U.S. military's use of bottled water in Iraq. If you do the math using the 160,000 troops plus civilian workers, and add the Iraqis whose water infrastructure has been gone since we bombed their cities, and all of these consume several liters of bottled water per day, the amount of money already being spent on bottled water is staggering. That much money coupled with little or no regulation spells opportunity for the unscrupulous.

Juanita: We are living in a time that seems to be defined by war and fear. How real, in your opinion, is the threat we hear in the media of the possibility of terrorists poisoning our water supply?

Dennis: Public water supplies may be vulnerable to attack by terrorists. Many public holding lakes and reservoirs are unprotected. However, the larger threat to our water supply is the denigration of public regard of cheap and available public water systems. In times of national emergencies, a supply of bottled water is essential such as when all capacity for public water was damaged following Hurricane Katrina. However, bottled water should be a public health alternative, not a daily purchase.

Juanita: Dennis, your book will be enjoyed by a large cross-section of readers, from those wanting an exciting mystery novel, to nature lovers and environmentalists, to those

in the ‘conspiracy community.’ What thoughts would you like your readers to be left with after reading your book? And, when can they expect the sequel?

Dennis: I would like readers to become aware and active in the future of water, both in their own communities and abroad. In addition to the strong profit motives, little control over the bottled water industry exists, and the cast off plastic containers are becoming a disposal problem. Only when people become aware and active concerning the vanishing resources of our world, can we alter policies and regulations. Water is taken for granted, yet water will soon become the petroleum of the future.

I do not have a release date for the sequel “Ancient Water”. The setting for Dr. Francis Allenton is Paris where he believes he can escape the water cartel. However, the cartel, especially Purlough, and his new nemesis, Adam, play a continuing role in Francis’ endeavors. Cassidy joins Francis and they share an intense concern for Mother Earth when water recovered from deep space may be introduced to the world’s oceans. The entity that did not destroy Francis’ Caduceus continues to hold it hostage. This second book explores the complexity of water in space. The belief that all water on earth is stellar water has fueled much speculation about the origin of life on this planet, and the search for life in space depends on sustainable, liquid water. We know that water is in space, a comet is not much more than a vast dirty snow ball. The real question is: is space water H₂O, water as we know it on earth? “Ancient Water” examines these issues as well as grapples with the consequences of trying to fix the world’s contaminated water supply.

Juanita: Thank you for your insightful interview and compelling novel. I’m sure your readers will be on the edge of their seats anticipating the sequel. Do you have any last thoughts you would like to share with your readers?

Dennis: We take water for granted yet nothing that lives on this earth could do so without liquid water. Like many of our natural resources, clean, free water is becoming a relic of the past. It is not too late to begin to change our consumer habits toward water. We often relegate water to no more than a medium to carry human waste, yet when the availability of water declines, we realize our absolute and complete dependency. At one time in our history, native people used spring water for healing. It wasn’t that they felt somewhat better because they spent time in the water, water healed them. Natural water, the stuff of life in the universe, still has that healing capacity, but only in clean, naturally occurring deep water springs. We are made of water and we owe it respect.