

Watching John Ringo and his friend Doc Travis talk was like seeing two school boys trying to win a contest by telling the better story. The best part about the whole encounter was that these crazy and extremely humorous stories were mostly true. A recent author’s dinner hosted by Baen books, was not where John Ringo had expected to be at this point in his life.

Working in Richmond, Va. in 1995 as a security guard pulling 12 hour shifts left a great deal of time for reading and writing. “I just picked up a yellow pad and a pen and started writing a story. That one never went anywhere, but the next time it happened it was the core of my first published novel” said Ringo.

John Ringo is a New York Times best selling author for Baen books. He has written or collaborated on 14 published books and is currently working on five more. He has also written op-ed pieces for the New York Post and has done some guest commentating for Fox news. Ringo still looks at writing as a hobby, just like SCUBA and salt-water fishing. “I still have a hard time thinking of it as work,” remarked Ringo as he recounted various jobs in his past. He started to spend a lot of time writing in hopes of getting published, feeling that “it was a better job than any of the others I’d had. And I still agree,” said Ringo.

John Duncan Ringo was born the sixth child of an already large Catholic family.

Although being unexpected and the sixth child, Ringo felt quite loved by his family. His

Chuck Rainey

“I have to do it”

father worked as an engineer and was often away from home for long periods of time, which left Ringo to be raised predominantly by his mother and older sisters. Strong family ties influenced Ringo growing up. “Mostly the influence, was knowing that someone had my back as long as family was around.”

Some of Ringo’s creations come from his personal experiences, like the character Roger in “March Up Country”. Being nine years younger than his closest sibling caused Ringo to feel the need to catch up to the pack. “I’ve never been a prince, but I know what it’s like having older siblings that you can’t seem to equal.”

Ringo has always had a love for the written word. Traveling the country and much of the world during his childhood, left little time to make friends. “My main friends were books” Ringo explained discussing the 14 schools he attended before graduating high school.

Many of Ringo’s works have a theme set during war. He served four years in the 82nd Airborne, and some time in the Army National Guard. Ringo originally planned to be a career military officer, but admits “I wasn’t a very good soldier.” His military writing comes more from his personal orientation and study of military action. “The base thought process, the morals, the mentality that I call the “mentat civitas” is more what affects my writing than my experiences” said Ringo.

Chuck Rainey

“I have to do it”

Music is most assuredly his biggest creative influence. Ringo has personal play sets he compiles to spark the right mood for whatever character or circumstance he is writing about. For Ringo, music has three distinct purposes. The first is mood setting. If the story is a combat scene the “pure combat” mix is played. This includes tracks like “Veteran of the Psychic Wars” by Blue Oyster Cult and “Winterborn” by Cruxshadows.

Ringo said those driving rhythms keep him focused on speed and power. Other compilations help Ringo drown out background noise and focus on his works. He prefers to write outside and usually at night. On occasion a song will bring concepts into focus. “I heard Evanescence’s “Bring Me To Life” on the radio one day,” and the story in my head came out. “I knew I wanted to write “Cally’s War,” had a vague idea of what should be going on but had nothing else.” Music is a large part of the life of John Ringo and its inspirations help bring his wonderful writing to the public.

Ringo speaks so casually about the process of writing and what he calls a “vision of fire.” Usually a story for Ringo starts with what he called a “vision of fire.” A “vision of fire” is a strong general idea or a powerful scene. Next, the idea sits in his mind and a period of “daydreaming” creates all the details. After the story has grown a bit it is time to put it in writing. Once the main scenes or theme is written, all that is left is to fill in the “bits between the known scenes.” “I generally *have* to do it. I have a story that wants to be told and it won’t leave me alone until I tell it,” Ringo explained. Sometimes stories will simply come and go for years, but others, Ringo said, “spring forth full grown, as Athena Nike from the forehead of Zeus.”

From the anything-is-possible world at the beginning of “There Will Be Dragons,” to the careful and accurate description of life on a modern college campus found in “Ghost,” John Ringo brings images into vivid detail. Ringo then takes you on a tour through the eyes of his larger-than-life characters providing fantasy, fun and humor with a hint of possible reality thrown in to keep you excited. Quick wit, incredible skills and a knack for getting in trouble would define the main character in “Ghost.” This Ex-Navy Seal just can’t remember that saving the world is not his primary job anymore.

John Ringo is quite a storyteller. Story telling dates back to the beginning of man and stories, says Ringo, “Have to be heard.” Like all writers, Ringo wants as many people as possible to read his tales just for the reading pleasure, and sales are really points in a game. Ringo and Doc Travis exchanged dialogues for more than two hours as many assembled were drawn into the tales. “Stories have to be read” said Ringo. “For me, the money is more of a way of keeping score.”