



Rick Hautala, Anastasia Weigle, and Holly Newstein at WiggleWeigle's Bookstore in Biddeford, Maine. Hautala Author Signing Event 2009. Photographer: Maria Varnalis

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Maine Alpha

Spring Newsletter 2021

University of Maine Orono

INTO THE DARKNESS

Shining a Light on the Rick Hautala Papers

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We all have our fears of the dark. Some of us are creeps and some of us are peepers—two terms coined by Comedian Dan Cummins, podcaster for “Scared to Death.” Creeps like to be scared. Peepers like to be scared, but with lights on and with one eye open. The horror genre satisfies both and Rick Hautala, horror and speculative fiction writer aimed to please.

A graduate of the University of Maine in Orono with a Master of Art in English Literature (Renaissance and Medieval Literature), Hautala lived in southern Maine with author Holly Newstein. He served terms as Vice President and Trustee for the Horror Writers Association and received the prestigious Horror Writers Association (HWA) Lifetime Achievement Award along with Joe R. Lansdale in 2011.

My story begins in 1995 when I met Rick Hautala for the first time. I was Library Director and Head of Archives and Special Collections for the Warren Memorial Library in Westbrook, Maine. I often invited Rick to the library for readings and signings of his books. One day I asked Rick if he kept notes and papers of all he has written. His answer was, “Yes.” Then, in Rick’s self-deprecating style of humor, said, “Ah, I should chuck them in the trash,” in which I replied, “Don’t you dare do that!” and proceeded to lecture Rick on the importance of his papers in the

literary field. As a trained professional archivist, such papers as Rick's were important to emerging writers as well as revealing his creative growth as a established writer. I said that but that's okay as we were good friends, and I was now a major fan of his works. I suggested Rick donate his papers to the Warren Memorial Library archives and special collections, as his papers would be a valuable addition to the library to promote his work and support emerging writers

through workshops and talks. The year was 2003, the year I became and will be forever The Rick Hautala archivist.

Between 2003 and 2012, I would meet with Rick for Pizza and Beer along with his partner and later wife Holly Newstein and my husband Steve. Our conversations revolved around two topics: current affairs and what he was working on creatively. When it comes to current affairs, I will say that Rick is a major advocate for intellectual freedom, in particular, the protection of artistic and literary works. He was an advocate against censorship! His voice was the light in the darkness of oppression. Rick was passionate and fought for the writer's creative control of their works as many literary agents took more of the share of royalties than the writer, which were minimal in size in many cases. The writer's world is much harder today than it was 30 years ago. Rick's creative process is self-evident in the collection. Rick did extensive research on places, people, topics, and events. These were needed to give his story veracity. Great horror and speculative fiction work well when they are believable. From research, Rick would create his stories through various notes building on the idea. He created timelines and chapters. Then he took those chapter printed on paper, cut them up and tape them on a new page so he could add details to each chapter edited constantly. He used index cards too. Every card was for a page in his book and he added meticulous details for characters, what they were doing, location descriptions and even dialogue. Added to that were index cards for every page detailing dialogue, events, descriptions of places and characters, you name it. Rick was dedicated to his craft and he worked hard every day. As Rick would say, "Writers live a pretty solitary life." I think Rick was very humble and surprised to hear his colleagues and fans tell him how much he meant to them, not only as an advocate for emerging writers, but his friendship. Rick, like other respected authors in the genre of horror, psychological thrillers, and speculative fiction, had a strong and devoted fan base.

Some of the interesting items in his collection are his early unpublished materials. For example, during the mid to late 1970s, Rick wrote science fiction pieces such as "... An Even Break," "Path of my Birthing," and "Summer Invasion." I found "... An Even Break" a very humorous take on aliens who discover humans. The main alien character had a great distaste for what he called white, hairy, bi-pedal oxygen breathers. This character decided to cause the demise of the human race by planting $E=MC^2$ into what he considered a somewhat intelligent human. Surely this knowledge will destroy the bipedals for sure. But it did not as the aliens were unhappy to

find that that humans were now 'knocking' at their door—as in SETI. These science fiction short stories are very different from his published works today.

In late 1979 and 1980, Rick started working on his novel "The Bog Man," which would later be retitled "Moon Bog." Rick asked Steven King to look at his early drafts and provide some critique. The correspondences between Rick Hautala and Steven King were quite fruitful. King's critique and suggestions for Rick's work were peppered with a sense of humor and colorful language. These letters reveal the relationship between King and Hautala in their early years as writers in which each supported the other in their endeavors. For those who do not know, Steven King and Rick Hautala attend UMO around the same time (King 1966-1970 Hautala 1966-1974).

A great example of creative collaboration was between Rick and Mark Steensland's conception of a webisode series back in 2008-09. These webisodes would consist of 3-6 minute short stories. There were 25 webisodes in place. Correspondence between Hautala/Steensland and Brendan Deenan, who I believe at that time was working for a New York-based management-production outfit called Objective Entertainment, showed they were working through the project. These papers included multiple drafts between March and April 2009. Like all creative ideas, they start with interest, but the industry is fickle, and these ideas did not come to fruition. There are numerous research materials in his collections that dealt with writing styles used in television, film, scripts, and even game apps. Rick expanded his writing from novels, to scripts and screenplays, graphic novels, television, and gaming apps.

The Rick Hautala papers are housed in the Maine State Library archives and special collections (currently in storage while the Augusta Cultural Building is under renovations). His collection encompasses 41 linear feet offering us a glimpse of this writer's creative process from writing his first international bestseller, "Little Brothers," which published in Finland under the title Hamuu by Werner Söderström and Nightstone, which sold over one million copies. Book published after Rick's death were "Chills" (November 2013), "Star Road: A Science Fiction Novel" (Jan. 2014), "Mockingbird Bay" (May 2014), and "Waiting" (2017). Rick Hautala also wrote a mainstream novel titled, "The Cove," which was published in 2014. His collection contains published materials posthumously as well. The date range of Hautala papers run from 1940 to 2017, exceeding his death in 2013.

There are manuscripts in various drafts, editions, story notes, manuscript proposals, correspondences between the writer and publisher, the writer and agent, and between writers. There are publishing and film contracts, news clippings, publicity materials, research materials, scripts, screenplays, writer's conference materials, photos, and other author writings in which Rick endorsed and reviewed many books including those written by Bentley Little, Matthew J. Costello, and Christopher Golden. His correspondences between other writers include Stephen King, Mark Steensland, George Romeo, Peter Straub, Bentley Little, Douglas

Winter, Richard Laymon, Ed Gorman, Joseph Citro, Christopher Fahey, Dean Koontz, Robert McCammon, William (Bill) Relling to name a few, and production companies as well as film and literary agencies. Rick also wrote screenplays for short films such as the multiple award-winning *Peekers*, based on a short story by Kealan Patrick Burke; *The Ugly Film*, based on the short story by Ed Gorman; *Lovecraft's Pillow* inspired by a suggestion from Stephen King, and *Dead @ 17*, based on the graphic novel by Josh Howard. Rick Hautala also collaborated with other authors to write serials such as the "Body of Evidence" novels co-written with Christopher Golden.

So prolific was Hautala's writing, that he also wrote under a Pseudonym, A. J. Mathews, using a variation of his sons' names — Aaron, Jesse, and Matti. Although Rick Hautala is not with us today, his legacy lives on in his papers which encompass the full breadth and scope of his works. Shine on Rick Hautala.