

FIRE GAZER

Arson at the Wolfe House

A Conversation with Kevin Burton McGuire

Kevin Burton McGuire is a native of Cincinnati Ohio who received his MA degree in Literature from Marquette University. He is the author of numerous short stories and a book of poetry, *When it Rains in Carolina*. Kevin is a professional writer who lives with his wife Dinah in Asheville, North Carolina.



KEVIN BURTON MCGUIRE

Q. What compelled you to write *Fire Gazer*, and why did you use the arson fire at the Wolfe Memorial as the historical setting?

A. I wrote *Fire Gazer* to answer the question "Why would someone intentionally burn an historic treasure like the Thomas Wolfe boyhood home?" Like anyone, I was upset by the fire because it damaged a cultural treasure. Later I discovered similar incidents around the nation that are recounted in the book. I wondered what message individuals are trying to send to our society when they commit such acts. Those wonderings became *Fire Gazer*.

Q. Is *Fire Gazer* a true story?

A. No, *Fire Gazer* is a work of Historical Fiction. Although the Wolfe house was seriously damaged by an arsonist, this story is about a serial arsonist who is capable of such an act. None of the characters are real.

Q. When did you realize you wanted to become a writer? Was it at an early age?

A. I was about 10 when a teacher asked our class to write a story. I loved making up the story and I have been writing ever since.

Q. What books or authors have inspired you?

A. That's a hard question since, there are so many gifted writers. I admire modern writers such as Faulkner and Fitzgerald – and, yes, Thomas Wolfe. I also appreciate the work of contemporaries like Ron Rash and Fred Chappell.

Q. Do your personal experiences and beliefs work their way into your writing, and do any of the characters in *Fire Gazer* reflect those?

A. I suppose it is impossible to write without revealing some personal beliefs, but fiction writing is not my private "soap box." I try to create universal characters that speak and act plausibly. Then I turn them loose to see what they will do.

Q. Are you working on another book? If so, what is it about?

A. I have a couple of ideas right now that might make good books. No matter which I choose to work on, I think it will be historical fiction. The culture of Western North Carolina is rich and the story telling tradition is still strong, so fascinating things to write about are emerging all the time.

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