

Missourian, Wednesday, May 12, 2010

New York Times Bestselling Author Ridley Pearson Will Speak to Families May 21 at Scenic Regional Library About

# 'The Man Behind the Curtain'

By Karen Cernich, *Missourian* Features Editor

**A**uthor Ridley Pearson considers himself an entertainer, and a funny one at that, especially when he's giving presentations like the one scheduled at Scenic Regional Library in Union later this month.

The *New York Times* bestselling author of both adult and children's fiction will be at the Union library Friday, May 21, from 7-9 p.m. for a 30- to 45-minute talk followed by a book signing. Copies of his books will be available for purchase at the event.

Pearson said his presentation, "From Flaming Fingernails to Peter Pan — An Author's Back Story!" will appeal both to the adult fans and child fans.

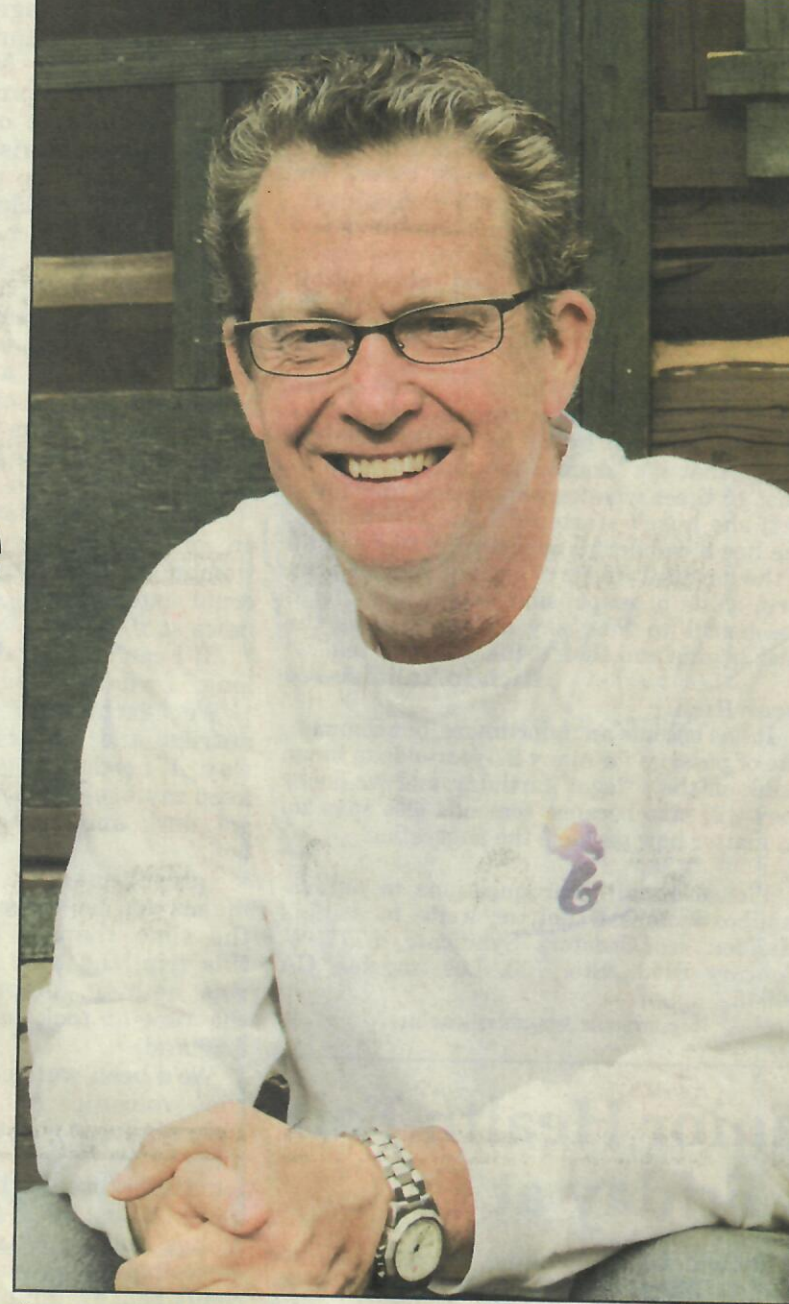
"What I hope to bring to my talk in Union are stories of one author's life — I hope, often amusing — so that the audience can take a look at the man behind the curtain, the process of writing and the joys of life," Pearson told *The Missourian* through an e-mail interview.

Pearson broke into the book industry writing crime sto-

ries for adults and later segued into the children's market writing adventure stories for young adults (upper elementary/middle school-aged children). Now he writes for both genres.

Since 1988, Pearson has published over 20 adult books and since 2004, more than 10 young adult books, including the "Peter and the Starcatchers" series with Pulitzer Prize-winning humorist Dave Barry, which tells the story of how a boy became Peter Pan, and the Kingdom Keepers series that tell about after hours adventures at the Disney World theme park.

The third installment of the Kingdom Keepers series, "Disney in Shadows," was released last month. And Pearson's newest adult crime



**Pearson, who writes both adult crime stories and youth adventure stories, will give a 30- to 45-minute presentation, "From Flaming Fingernails to Peter Pan — An Author's Back Story!," Friday night, May 21, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Scenic Regional Library in Union. Books will be available for purchase at the event, and Pearson will make time to autograph copies.** Submitted Photos.

book, "In Harm's Way," will be released in August.

The fifth Starcatchers book, "The Bridge to Neverland," is set to be released in fall 2011.

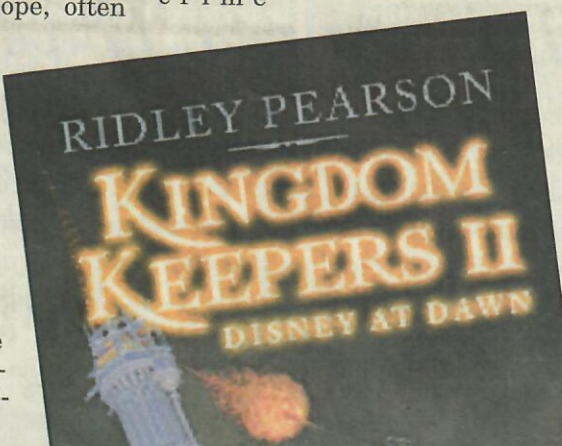
Vivienne Beckett, assistant director at Scenic Regional Library, said local patrons are looking forward to Pearson's visit May 21.

"He is a very engaging and entertaining speaker," said Beckett.

"We hope to pack the library."

Pearson was born and raised on the East Coast, but today has homes in St. Louis and Idaho, where he lives with his wife, Marcelle, and two daughters, Paige and Storey.

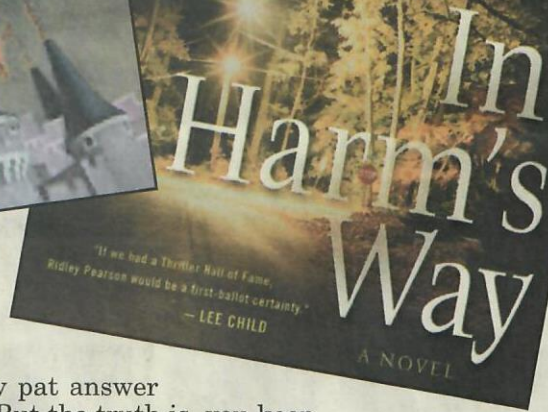
Below are the questions and answers from *The Missourian's* e-mail interview with Pearson.



**Pearson's Kingdom Keepers series about goings-on after hours at Walt Disney World is popular with upper elementary and middle school kids.**



# PEARSON



**Pearson's newest adult crime novel, "In Harm's Way," will be released this August.**

**Missourian:** Did you always know you wanted to be a writer?

**Pearson:** Without knowing it, I embarked on my writing career at the age of 10 when I taught myself to touch type using a how-to book I borrowed from my older sister. Between the ages of 10 and 15 I must have written 100 short stories simply as a means to continue to practice my typing.

In high school and college, academics prevailed and I stopped writing creatively. But after college, on the road as a wanna-be James Taylor, I began to write again. I wrote six hours a day for 8 1/2 years before finally selling my first novel — an espionage novel involving chemical warfare that took place in Canada. Knowing nothing about chemical warfare or Canada I researched that novel by taking out over 80 books through my local library's interlibrary loan program. And I got lucky: now published 25 crime and suspense novels for adults, and a dozen adventure novels for younger readers.

**Missourian:** Tell me about how you got into writing children's books. I read somewhere that one of your daughters asked a question about Peter Pan. Is that right?

**Pearson:** Writers are always looking for ideas. The most commonly asked question of any writer is: "Where do you get

your ideas?" My pat answer is, "Wal-Mart." But the truth is, you keep your eye open. So when one night I was reading Peter Pan to my then-5-year-old daughter and she asked me how Capt. Hook had met Peter in the first place, I saw the possibility for a prequel: how did a young boy become Peter Pan?

That has led to a wonderful collaboration with Dave Barry and the "Starcatchers" series.

**Missourian:** I understand you have a close working relationship with Disney. Did you have to get permission from the company before you could write about Peter Pan?

**Pearson:** J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan is in public domain, as are so many of our wonderful classics, so the rights to the story never presented a problem for Dave Barry and me.

In the (United Kingdom) it's a different story: the rights are held by a children's hospital, so the majority of the royalties to our books that sell in the EU (European Union) go to the Great Oramand Hospital in London.

**Missourian:** How does writing fiction for children compare with writing it for adults? Do you prefer one over the other?

**Pearson:** I'm often asked how I "change up my game" to write for children, and I have to answer honestly: very little. Dave Barry and I, in starting up the "Starcatchers" series decided we would not write down to our readers. We — and I — want to tell compelling, action-driven stories with intriguing and interesting characters.

That's my mission whether writing for adults or younger readers. The point being that younger readers are much smarter and much more capable than we often give them credit for.

**Missourian:** What is your writing process like? Where do you write, and how do you find your inspiration?

**Pearson:** I love what I do. Being able to write for a living is a real blessing, so I do it all the time in all sorts of places and try to get between six and 11 hours in each day, whether at home or on a rare vacation with the family. Writing for a living is a privilege — you have to earn it every day.