

What angle did you explore on the theme of soldiers in space in your story “Across An Endless Sea”?

I wanted to make my story as real as possible. The best works of military science fiction are written by those who served: Robert Heinlein, Joe Haldeman and David Drake. I didn't serve, but my father did during World War II in the South Pacific. And he told me many stories about his experiences during that time. I incorporated some of those experiences into my story to make the fiction walk, talk and act like the truth. The theme of self-preservation versus self-sacrifice would ring hollow without some foundation in reality, no matter how fantastic the genre.

Where do you get your story ideas?

From my ideas jar on the kitchen counter, right behind a half-empty bottle of Scotch.

What do you see as some of the advantages of the short story format over longer fiction formats, such as novels?

Brevity is the strength and power of the short form. It forces the writer to cut the filler and get to the point. And the reader gets rewarded without having to plow through tons of wordage. One of my favorite writers David J. Schow called short stories “Shadow Warriors” [Ninjas] that go largely unnoticed compared to novels. He likened them to “brief, passionate encounters” that were “more memorable” compared to the higher profile long form. And I happen to agree with him.

As a writer, what scares you the most?

Running out of things to say.

What is the best writing advice you've ever received?

At a Shore Leave convention I got to meet Susan Wright. I told her that I didn't think I could write the long form. I much preferred writing short stories. She told me to think of a novel as a bunch of short stories strung together and that I'd probably get through one. She was right.

What can readers expect from you next?

I finished a historical novel that I'm shopping around. But, I suspect a fast return to what I love most and what I've had the most success with, science fiction.