

Writer and Filmmaker VICTOR ROOK

by Jonathan Gardner

P*eople Who Need to Die*. That is the unforgettable title of Victor Rook's newest book. He is a diverse individual whose talents extend to filmmaking as well as writing.

"This is a book of satirical horror stories where in the year 2021 you are allowed to kill bad drivers, obnoxious cell phone users, horrible bosses, spammers, litterbugs, mean neighbors, and more. I had just finished a full-length novel entitled *In Search of Good Times*, which took three years to write. It's about a man who believes the fictional sitcom families from 'Good Times' and 'All in the Family' are real and goes on a road trip to find them.

"The first short story I wrote for *People Who Need To Die* is entitled "Black Friday Revenge." I was inspired by all the mall trappings you see during Black Friday. I thought, *these people should die* (laughing). So I wrote a story about a father whose son is trampled to death on Black Friday and seeks revenge by luring unsuspecting shoppers into a warehouse he has decked out to look like a discount store, then makes them play shopping games to survive. From there I thought of other groups of people who tick me off, and came up with catchy title. It's funny how people react to it at book signings. They love it!"

They are also surprised that *People Who Need to Die* extends beyond dark humor. "There are touching moments in the stories, as well as romance. I think it's some of my best writing."

Rook started filming and editing back in college. "MTV aired in 1985 and I'd recruit college mates to produce our own versions of music videos. While interning at IBM in Binghamton, New York, I saved up enough money to purchase an RCA video camera. It was one of those cameras with the separate VCR that you'd swing over your shoulder. I won a trip to Florida for a music video I produced to Madonna's 'Vogue' single. Eventually I purchased an editing system and upgraded to digital."

Rook's documentaries are award winners. His documentary *Beyond the Garden Gate*, a year in the life of a garden set to music, won the 2000 Telly Award, the 25th Anniversary Classic Telly Award, and also aired on PBS.

"I was renting a cottage behind a larger home at the



time. I looked around and decided it would be nice to document the life of the garden—seasons, plants, flowers, bugs, birds, animals, etc. For two years I set up the camera almost daily. Emmy-nominated composer Matt Ender allowed me to use some of his music in exchange for web design. That's how *Beyond the Garden Gate* came about. Oddly, my next two documentaries covered wrestling of all types. I choose film projects where I know my passion will sustain the amount of time and effort to produce them."

Those investments paid off. *Changing Perceptions: Profile of an Openly Gay Pro Wrestler* won the 2006 Telly Award, and *Stronghold: In the Grip of Wrestling* was selected for both the 2010 All Sports Los Angeles Film Festival and ImageOut in Rochester, New York.

Rook shares his own story on the written page via 2010's *Musings of a Dysfunctional Life*, his autobiographical assortment of short stories that include essays on dreams, religion, music, ghosts, aging and growing up in an abusive family.

Rook's eclectic interests continue to influence his current projects. "I seem to dabble in all genres. I'm currently finishing up a craft book called *Dollar Store Crafts & Recipes*, and a book of my poems. It will be easy-to-comprehend poetry for people who hate poetry but would like to enjoy it. I'm also working on a nature DVD called *Natural Moments*, which will be soothing vignettes of nature similar to what you see at the end of CBS Sunday Morning.

"But I'd also like people to see that I am a diverse writer, so my memoir of short anecdotes, *Musings of a Dysfunctional Life*, and *In Search of Good Times* will give them a good taste of who I really am." ■

