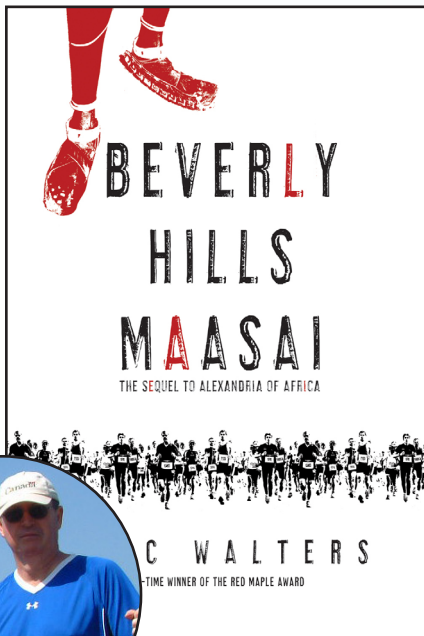


Book Fair Author Spotlight On...



Eric Walters Beverly Hills Maasai

Q What inspires you to write?

A Almost everything! I write what interest me and I find the world pretty fascinating. On my most recent trip I ended up writing a short story about the library we opened (named after my Grade 5 teacher - Christena Gay), a picture book about a child in our program (My Name is Blessing) and was inspired by a stray dog I met in Pompei to start another story. All along I was writing a novel about feral (wild) cats and the place I stayed had tons of stray cats so I was taking pictures, watching them, writing them into the novel.

Q What advice do you have for young writers?

A Write what interests you. As a teacher I NEVER would assign topics - let people figure out what inspires them, what interests them and then the story flows. As well, please, please, please, do your research. Don't write until you understand the topic and then write out a story map to let you know where the story is going.

Q What was your favourite book when you were growing up?

A *Owls in the Family* by Farley Mowat

Q What do you like to do when you're not writing?

A I founded and run a children's program in Kenya for orphans (www.creationofhope.com). I spent a lot of time coordinating things, visiting the program and working with schools. We had over a hundred and twenty-five schools involved last year. We made two commitments to those schools - every cent they give goes for service, and through the website we show them dollar by dollar, item by item, school by school where their money goes.

Q What has been the biggest achievement of your career so far?

A Inspiring young people to want to not just read my books but understand the real issues and get involved to make a difference.

Q Alexandria's experiences were based on real events and people you met when you first visited Africa. What inspired you to bring Nebala to Alexandria's home in the sequel?

A I really enjoyed Alexandria - writing as a very spoiled 16 year-old girl was a unique experience for me. Then I was reading about 6 Maasai warriors who ran in the London Marathon and knew I had an opportunity to continue the story. It's the same sort of 'fish out of water' story except this time they came to Beverly Hills rather than have Alexandria in Africa.