

One for the Books

By Jennifer Huffman
Register Writer

Raymond Lawrason calls himself a bibliovore.

"When I was four I taught myself to read," Lawrason said. In elementary school he would read a whole chapter book in one night, leaving his teachers scrambling to give him more reading material, Lawrason said.

A book lover, Lawrason seems to have found the perfect career. He's the new manager at Copperfield's Books in Napa.

"Being around books has always been important to me," he said. Lawrason, 40, who most recently worked at the Petaluma Copperfield's location. He's been with the company for six years. The book chain has seven locations: Calistoga, Napa, Petaluma, Sebastopol (both a new and used bookstore), Healdsburg and Santa Rosa.

What's new at Copperfield's?

We have an artist's window in front of store. Local artists and community organizations can use that window for a full month without charge. It's a great way to engender that connection between the bookstore and community. We created a community/common area inside the bookstore where groups or clubs can meet. We're going to look at rolling out a salon-style meet-and-greet with several local authors and other special events.

What books are popular at Copperfield's right now?

"The Tiger's Wife" by Tea Obreht, "Cutting for Stone" by Abraham Verghese and "The Autobiography of Mark Twain" by Mark Twain.

Which three people would you most like to have dinner with?

Author Ray Bradbury, science fiction writer Harlan Ellison and Mark Twain.

Where are you from?

I was born and raised in Healdsburg. We moved to Napa when I was 11. I went to junior high and high school in Napa.

Are you a writer?

I dabble in writing but I tend to focus on my painting. I do two different styles: abstract impressionism and Polynesian tiki-style pop art. The tiki pop art complements my collection of tiki mugs. I also collect signed first-edition books.

Do you have a favorite book?

My favorite book of all time is "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury. It's one of those cutting human condition books wrapped around a really good science fiction novel.

What was your first job?

I was a dishwasher for Stein's restaurant, here in Napa. I think that location is a hunting supply store now.

How did you get into this business?

I got a job in the early '90s working for Bookends Bookstore downtown.

What are your favorite bookstores outside of California?

Powell's Books in Portland, Ore., Forbidden Planet in London and Haslam's Books in St. Petersburg, Fla.

What is the biggest challenge your business has faced?

The book industry is always a challenging one, especially with all of the new emerging technology for reading electronically. We haven't moved into that venue yet. (E-readers) are a wonderful tool but I don't think they will ever really replace the printed word.



Raymond Lawrason is the new store manager at Copperfield's Books in Napa. J.L. Sousa/Register

More from Raymond Lawrason

If you wrote your autobiography, what would you name the book?

"The Strangest Chapter."

What job would you like to try/not like to try?

I would be hard-pressed to find a job I loved as much as working with books.

A career in politics wouldn't be very suited to my tastes.

What's the worst job you ever had?

Selling cemetery insurance. It was an emotionally demanding job, and very high pressure.

I can't live without:

Books. Definitely books.

What's on your to-do list?

Bringing more author and community events to the store.

What is one thing you hope to accomplish in your lifetime that you haven't yet?

Get one of my paintings in the di Rosa preserve.

What's your favorite gift to give?

Books. And then some more books.

What is your favorite charity?

I donate to the Wildlife Foundation yearly.

What was your childhood ambition?

To be an artist or an astronaut.

What's the most significant project you've been involved with in your career?

Partnering more fully with the Uptown Theatre for book events. That, paired with establishing a "reading area" that book clubs and civic groups can utilize in the store, help to build a stronger sense of community.

If you could be anywhere right now, where would you be?

I'm pretty happy being right where I am, though I have some good vacation ideas...