

# Buffalo Soldier Sentinel Ezine

January 2012

Interview for *First Dark: A Buffalo Soldier's Story* by Bob Rogers



Today, *Buffalo Soldier Sentinel* (BSS) is pleased to interview Bob Rogers about his new historical novel *First Dark: A Buffalo Soldier's Story*. His novel was released in December 2011.



*Bob Rogers, author of the historical novel **Will and Dena**, was an IBMer for thirty-three years, and is the founder of Global Medical Data in Charlotte, NC. He is a former army captain, Vietnam War veteran, and was a charter member of Baltimore, MD's chapter of the 9th and 10th (Horse) Cavalry Association. Bob lives in Charlotte.*

*BSS: Welcome, Bob. Of course, there's always interest here in talking to historical novelists – especially about Buffalo Soldiers. To start out, what is the historical setting of **First Dark: A Buffalo Soldier's Story** and the time period it spans?*

Bob: Thanks for the warm welcome. It's my pleasure to visit with you.

***First Dark: A Buffalo Soldier's Story** begins in the spring of 1863, near the middle of the American Civil War on a rice plantation, not far from Charleston, South Carolina. After a brief sojourn at the plantation, **First Dark** follows our hero, Isaac Rice, as he makes his escape. Geographically, the reader is taken on a voyage via the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico to Mississippi and onward to Missouri, Kansas, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), Texas, New Mexico, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Veracruz. By the time the reader reaches Veracruz with Isaac in 1882, the Civil War was long over, Reconstruction had ended, two revolutions had occurred in Mexico, and America's Indian Wars were near closing stages.*

*BSS: Please tell our readers about yourself.*

Bob: I was born and raised in Spartanburg, South Carolina. While growing up, one of my favorite things to do, when my uncles and older cousins gathered in the 1950s, was to eavesdrop on their stories about World War II and the Korean War. Those stories drove me to study history with passion. However, none of my secondary school or college history books mentioned Buffalo Soldiers.

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During the fifties, my heroes were Uncle Homer (a WWI veteran), Uncle Will (a WWII veteran and baseball player), Don Newcombe, and Albert Einstein.

One hundred and one years after Congress authorized, in 1866, army regiments of Colored troops, I reported for duty in A Troop, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Pleiku, Republic of South Vietnam. The same day in March 1967, I first learned of the Buffalo Soldiers.

*BSS: What do you do?*

Bob: I write historical novels and speak to bring attention to unsung heroes and remembrance of the examples they left for us. My main characters are ordinary men and women living life as best they can, but when circumstances made demands, they performed extraordinary deeds.

*BSS: What motivates you to write?*

In a word, it's remembrance. I hope my novels will entertain and inform this and future generations of our past. I hope my descendants and their peers, for years to come, will discover that we had ancestors who, with meager means, established thriving businesses.

My protagonists are soldiers, or former soldiers, who fought in America's wars. While in the army, my *First Dark* characters and their comrades built forts, roads, and telegraph lines. While they labored and protected pioneering settlers, Indians, railroad crews, stagecoaches, and overland freight caravans, these soldiers, newly freed men, discussed women, baseball, gambling, and their limited career alternatives. They examined the role models of the day, which, once slaves themselves, had become successful entrepreneurs.

*BSS: What is the message in **First Dark: A Buffalo Soldier's Story**?*

Bob: The first message is that war is futile and mankind's biggest failure; that love and hate are omnipresent. The second message is, no matter how dark our past may seem to have been, there is wisdom to be had from remembrance and observation of our forebearers that we can use today – especially from past entrepreneurs.

*BSS: What books or authors have influenced your life and writing?*

Bob: Herman Wouk is my favorite writer of historical fiction. His thoroughly researched novels about World War II were very entertaining with compelling human drama while getting the facts right as he told the story of the war along side the drama. His novels have set high standards for me.

*BSS: Did you learn anything from writing **First Dark**; if yes, what was it?*

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Bob: Sorry, that information is confidential. Just kidding.

On a serious note, yes I learned more than I can tell you. There are 112 entries in my *First Dark* bibliography, which does not include interviews, maps, or the several trips I made to most of the places and battle sites where my characters lived and fought. I discovered many people of whom I had never heard – dead and living.

One my favorite two discoveries was locating the birthplace of a fictional character to be nearly exactly as I had imagined it – the village of Carrizal in Mexico.

The other was learning about the actual life of a former Kentucky slave, Hiram Young, who became a very successful entrepreneur.

*BSS: By the way, are you an entrepreneur?*

Bob: Yes. First, I was an “intra-preneur” at IBM; then, I founded Global Medical Data, Inc.

*BBS: Are your entrepreneurial characters fiction or non-fiction?*

Bob: They are both. Examples of actual former slaves, who became entrepreneurs and appear in *First Dark*, include Hiram Young and Ben Montgomery.

*BBS: What entrepreneurial skills were important to your characters?*

Bob: The novel does not go into entrepreneur capabilities and skills. In my speeches and seminars, I talk more about certain traits and skills that successful business owners seem to have in common. I relate some of these to 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> century people – some of whom are in my novels.

*BBS: What are a few of these traits or skills?*

Bob: In speeches and seminars, I go into some depth about seven traits or skills. A few examples include, interpersonal, creative thinking, and leadership.

*BBS: What are the target audiences for your speeches and seminars?*

Bob: My audiences are primarily university students, our military, and senior high school students. However, I also accept invitations from conventions, book clubs, and others.

*BSS: When did you first consider yourself a writer?*

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Bob: I don't. At the beginning of each chapter in every book, I start with the hope that I can write the best scenes I can.

*BSS: Where do you get your ideas for your books?*

Bob: My characters and their antics come from observing people I see day to day. Then, I transport them to the war or time period that I happen to be writing about. I have already decided that I will write at least one novel for each major war in which United States's armed forces have engaged in the period 1860 – 1975.

*BSS: What was your favorite chapter in **First Dark** to write and why?*

Bob: That would be the single chapter located in the second half of *First Dark* in which Isaac and main characters James, Ortega, and Alejandra appear – oh, and a ghost.

In this chapter, I reached a major milestone that was set twenty years before when I started *First Dark*.

*BSS: Why do you feel you had to tell this story?*

Bob: We must tell our stories for remembrance, learning, wisdom, and so our descendents will know the difference when conservative revisionists attempt to tell our stories for us. We must remember all – our complete history with its horror and humor.

*BSS: What is your upcoming book about?*

Bob: My next book (untitled) is a sequel to *Will and Dena*. Along with Will and Dena, several of the main characters will return – and of course, new characters will emerge. The plan is to set the next book in the period 1945-1955 to include the Korean War and a part of the Civil Rights struggle in the United States. The scheduled release is in the autumn of 2013.

Meanwhile, I will post progress, from time to time, in my blog, located in my web site.

[bobrogers.biz](http://bobrogers.biz)

*BSS: Bob, thank you for sharing your vision and thoughts with **Buffalo Soldier Sentinel** readers.*

Bob: Thank you. It was my pleasure.