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## ALLEN MENDENHALL INTERVIEWS TOM TURNER, AUTHOR OF "PALM BEACH NASTY"

 MARCH 26, 2015 BY [ALLEN MENDENHALL](#)  [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

**AM:** Hi, Tom. Thanks for talking to us about your new novel, *Palm Beach Nasty*. It's a crime thriller, and we don't have a chance to feature many crime thrillers—a genre that's very popular. What brought you to the genre?

**TT:** Thanks for interviewing me, Allen. In answer to your question: Honestly, when I started writing—twenty years ago—I felt that I wasn't good enough to write a story without action—a murder here, a shoot-out there, maybe throw in a car chase. You know, to keep the reader engaged, turning pages. Turns out, I didn't really need that stuff, but now I like the crime novel genre so much I'd never write anything else.

**AM:** You used to call Palm Beach home. It's central to this story in which characters are shaped by place.



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There's something "Palm Beach" about them. Is there something "Palm Beach" about you? Or do you seem to adapt to your climate? You now live in Charleston, South Carolina—one of my favorite cities—and have completed a book set in Charleston.

TT: I love Palm Beach and have spent a fair amount of time there. It's got everything. Glamour, glitz, pretension, phonies, scammers, wannabes, never-will-be's and some of the greatest, down-to-earth, nicest people you'll ever meet. It is an incredible mine of material. I think it's good for ten more sequels to *Palm Beach Nasty!* Charleston, too, is a great source of material. Way different, but like Palm Beach, it's got everything.

**AM: Tell us about Charlie Crawford and Mort Ortt, a pair of cops who get set on the trail of a killer. Is it true you came up with them while working the Florida real estate market**

TT: They were amalgams of people that I know. I wanted opposites, but ones who also had a lot in common. Mort is maybe my favorite character of all. This short, squat, wheezing, profane guy who turns out can run faster and jump higher than his handsome, in-shape partner, Charlie Crawford.

**AM: Why are Charlie and Mort so different?**

TT: As I said in response to your previous question, imagine a short—what's a nice word for fat?—rotund guy, balding, fifty but looks like sixty, then imagine a tall, handsome Adonis.

The short guy, Ott, is easy to underestimate, that's what makes him so critical to their partnership. Plus he has insights that Crawford never has.

**AM: Have you always been a writer?**

TT: I started out as a copywriter in New York. And, as I'm sure you know, all copywriters think they have the great American novel in them. Maybe one did. F. Scott Fitzgerald was originally a copywriter



Tom Turner

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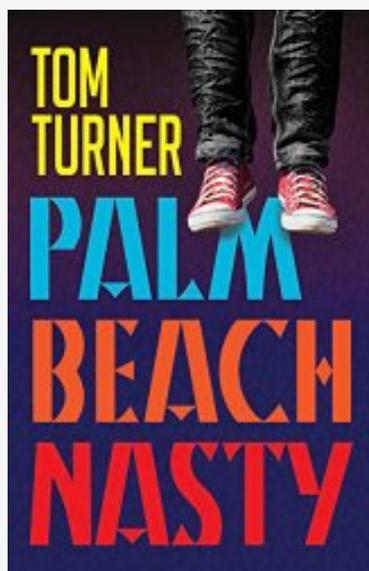
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as were Joseph Heller, Salman Rushie, Dom Delillo and Dorothy Sayers. I wasn't a very good copywriter and got into real estate when I was thirty. Ten years later, I started writing on the side and twenty years after that came *Palm Beach Nasty*.

**AM: Do you read crime thrillers written by others? Who are your favorite authors?**

TT: Yes, I do. My top two are Elmore Leonard and James Lee Burke. I could rhapsodize forever on their merits, but suffice it to say, nobody wrote dialogue and was more real than Leonard. And nobody wrote descriptions and has more vivid, impossible-to-forget characters than James Lee Burke. I also really like Lee Child, who named one of his recurring characters, Major Susan Turner, after my ex-wife, but that's another story!



Tom Turner

**AM: You worked at a private investigating firm in Florida. What was that like?**

TT: I was mainly a guy who did cheating spouse investigations. Suffice it to say, it wasn't pretty and I only lasted ten months at it. Most of the experiences I have from it are X-rated and won't find their way into my novels.

**AM: Did that experience influence *Palm Beach Nasty* at all?**

TT: Not so much. What really influenced *Palm Beach Nasty* was my time in Palm Beach renovating and building spec houses. I dealt with a million people—contractors, buyers, sellers, real-state brokers, you-name-it—and a lot of them had some pretty interesting stories. I just gave their stories a good jolt of steroids.

**AM: Your book came out in January, right? Are you going on a book tour?**

TT: Yes, the book came out on January 31st. My incredible publicists—it's okay to slip a plug in here, right?—Caitlin Hamilton and Rick Summie, have me doing quite a few author talks and signings in both Charleston and the Palm Beach area. I have absolutely no clue how to do these things, so I'll just stumble and bumble my way through them. Actually, I'm really looking forward to them.

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AM: Thanks for doing this interview, Tom. Best of luck at these book talks and signings, and of course with the book sales as well.

Thank you, Allen. I really appreciate the opportunity you've given me. Next time you're in Charleston, give me a call. I know where the best gin mills are!

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### About Allen Mendenhall

Allen Mendenhall is a writer, attorney, and educator. His book Literature and Liberty



(Rowman & Littlefield / Lexington Books) was released in 2014. He blogs at The Literary Lawyer. Visit his website at [AllenMendenhall.com](http://AllenMendenhall.com).

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