

An open book with white pages and a red cover is shown from a slightly elevated angle. The text is overlaid on the book and the background.

Authors
of the
Pacific **N**orthwest

EPIISODE 103

Authors of the Pacific Northwest, Ep. 103: Rob Phillips

Vikki J. Carter: Hi there, listeners. It's the host and of producer. Vikki J Carter of this podcast, the [Authors of the Pacific Northwest](#). And before we jump into the episode, I wanted to stop real quickly and share with you the newest project that I'm working on. If you are an author, I think you might be interested in it. I have a YouTube channel that I just launched called the [Author's Librarian on YouTube](#). And on that YouTube channel, I am going to share with you free, accessible resources that you can use to help you with researching. I'm going to give you tips. I'm also interviewing Librarians, and I'm writing a book to help authors with researching. So you hope you find me there on that YouTube channel. You can find the link in the show notes. Now let's get to the program. Welcome to the podcast Authors of the Pacific Northwest, where I connect authors with their readers. We also talk all about the author's inspiration, their journey to publication, and the authors will educate me... and you listener. They're all about the business of writing. I'm your host, [Vikki J Carter, also known as The Author's Librarian](#).

Vikki J. Carter: Hey there, podcast listeners. Thank you so much for coming back to the Authors of the Pacific Northwest. And today I have the privilege of introducing you to Rob Phillips. So Rob say hello to the listeners.

Robert Phillips: Hello everybody. Thanks for having me on Vikki. I appreciate it.

Vikki J. Carter: I am so thrilled to have you because my listeners didn't know this because I didn't hit record right away, but we were talking about your books and how much I fell in love with them, which is interesting because of the genre . Isn't one I would normally pick. but I'm super excited to have you here to talk about it.

Robert Phillips: Thank you. Yeah, I've, had several people say they're not big mystery readers, but they were got a hold of my book and they just really liked it. So, yeah, that's been kind of humbling honestly.

Vikki J. Carter: Well, I'm sure it is. So, we're going to talk about some timeline for you cause you are producing very quickly. So, I'm rather impressed, but let's start out Rob, by giving some context of where you live. So what state in the Northwest are you, living in?

Robert Phillips: I'm here I'm in, Yakima, Washington. I lived here most of my life. My background is basically in marketing and advertising. I graduated from WSU in the late seventies and went to work in the advertising world and had my own advertising business for 35 years. Worked with a lot of really good clients. We just recently sold the business and that's kind of freed me up to do a little more writing. So that's kind of nice. I'm working about 20 hours a week at, at my real job, but, that gives me more time to do some writing and a little more background. I've, been writing professionally since 1986. I, but it's all been in the form of magazine articles, newspaper columns. I've probably written over 1,200 different columns and articles over those years. And sold a lot of them and just have never tried to write a book . I always thought I might do it someday. And finally did it.

Vikki J. Carter: Well, I'll tell you it shows. So my listeners know now as I'm going into 2021, I'm taking a slow down approach to the podcast and I'm reading books from the authors before they come on. And so I have read both of your books actually. One isn't well, we'll probably be out by the second. We'll be out by the time the podcast comes out. the first one, I've already gotten a hold of and read. Thank you to your publisher. But it really shows you have a background in writing and there's so many things about your background in advertising that is something that a lot of us authors don't have and that's copywriting, even just public, you know how to get yourself out there, get a client out there for authors. We all have to do that ourselves and learn it. So you're lucky.

Robert Phillips: Lastly, been a benefit to me. You know, again, once I had my book written and, and Jon Gosch at Latah press, our books, took it and, and publish it. He helped me a lot with editing and, getting that out there. But then I thought, man, I, I need to market this if it's going to be successful. And, so I've been working hard at about it the first one while still writing the second one and trying to get it ready to print. So it's been a busy time, but I mean, I did some things just as simple as developing a point of purchase display for my book that should go into the bookstores. And that's helped sell a lot of books at the bookstore level. I fought a little bit outside of the box. As you know, as you read the two books I buy my, it's centered here in Central Washington. My character goes in and out of lots of different stores and towns and some of them are, are, hardware stores. And so I know the owner of the hardware group who are ACE hardware stores here in town. I just said, Hey, would you want to try to sell them up my book. And he read it and liked And he said, yeah, let's give it a try with my display in there. And we've sold over 500 books just in the hardware stores.

Vikki J. Carter: That's so awesome because what that is, you know, your readers, you know, what kind of people are going to probably like it. That's so crazy.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. And it's just been, it's been surprising in a way, but not surprising in another way. I mean, it's just another way of getting in front of potential readers who don't know who I am, or don't do anything about it, but because the book is about Central Washington, our centered in Central Washington, they, they picked it up and, and to a person almost they've liked it and ask him for the second book, which like you said, as you're listening to this, it's out now. and, hopefully it's doing as well as the first one did.

Vikki J. Carter: Now, Rob, you wrote the first and the second book really close together and that's not typical for most authors, at all. I mean, speaking from a person that's trying to write my first book, I'm interested. How did, did you already have the storyline in your head for both books or did it just organically happen as you're writing?

Robert Phillips: It just kind of happened. You know, when the COVID hit in April, March and April, I'm a big outdoors person. I love to hunt and fish and just be outdoors. And when the governor shut down all outdoor activities, fishing and hunting, I was kind of lost. I didn't know what I was going to do sitting in front of the television eating and potato chips and thinking this isn't going to work. I said, you know what I've always thought about writing a book. I'm just going to go do it. So I just locked myself in an upstairs bedroom. And, I had thought a little bit about what kind of a book I would like to write. if I were to ever write one and who my main character might be. and because I know the outdoors love, the outdoors have written about the outdoors for many, many years. I wanted to make my character related to that. So I made him a, a fish and wildlife officer. And he's lot younger than me. He's taller than me. He's stronger than me. He's better looking than me.

Vikki J. Carter: It was a really great side kicked you have one too.

Robert Phillips: So, anyway, so I just thought, okay, now let's put him in a situation where he can use his skills and that's where the kind of the creative writing over took over. And, and, it just, you know, I've been listening to a few other podcasts, yours and a few others, and, reading some stories and articles. And some of the authors, will lay out their whole book in a, in a format in a, you know, in a, and have it kind of figured out who, who the bad guy is, how that's going to end all of that kind of stuff. I had, none of that. I just started writing and it just kind of flowed out. And, and, you know, I took several little side side, you know, plots to the, to the, to kind of fill the book out and make my character kind of believable and lovable.

Robert Phillips: And, and it just kind of went. And , I honestly, I wrote the first draft in 24 days. And it just, you know, it just, I sat down some days I'd write for eight hours. Some days I'd write for four hours. Some days I'd write some, two hours depending on how I felt and what I was doing. And I've got two grown sons that are again, smarter than me and do a lot of reading. I would send them a chapter or two every day. And they read it and go, you know what, dad, this is not too bad. You know, keep going. And then they'd encourage me. Sometimes they'd give me an idea or two, or get me back on track. Sometimes I would write my character as, as if it was my age versus 37, which my character is, and they'd have to say, listen, dad, that's, you know, that's back in your day.

Robert Phillips: That's not enough. That worked out well. And then, and then, yeah, I had a, kind of a finished deal and they said, you really need to try to figure out how to get this published. And, you know, more about this than I do. I have no clue where you, where to begin. I called the local printer that we do business with in our ad business. And I said, can you print a book. He said, yeah, I can print a book. Then I might have one for you. And, and then, I called a friend who was a writer at the Yakima Herald, who I write for and, asked him, he, he published a book after retirement and I asked him how he did it. And he says, well, I published, worked through Amazon. He said, you know, it's, it's one way to go.

Robert Phillips: He says, but I know a publisher in Spokane that might be interested in your book. So I just looked them up online and found the editor's email address and shot him a few chapters and a note. And he liked what he was reading and said, "Get me, give me the rest of the book when you're done with it." And, I shot him the rest of the book and about two weeks, and he couldn't believe it. But he helped me a lot. He edited did a lot of editing for me and kind of straightened it out and, really made it a better book, the first book. And once that was kind of out of my hands, I was still, I was in the mood and writing and really was kind of enjoying it. I liked my character. The publisher said this could make a really nice series. So I said, let's, let's try a second one. And I jumped right in and, and it took me a little longer. It was more like 60 days to write that one.

Robert Phillips: And do as near as much editing or changing, he said, "You've kind of got it figured out" So, but, it's, it's been a really fun, fun process, a real learning process. And it's been, like I said, it's been very humbling. just to see how many people have liked it. I get, I've gotten really good reviews on Amazon. I get lots of emails from people that have read it and say how much they liked it and can't wait for the next book. And so anyway, and that's encouraged me and I'm writing the third book right now.

Vikki J. Carter: Oh, I'm so glad to hear that. I was going to ask. That was one another question.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. I'm working on it right now. So, it's just in the early stages. I'm only about three or four chapters in, but I finally got my storyline figured out. Now I'm starting to move on itself.

Vikki J. Carter: It Might only

Vikki J. Carter: be another 60 days before that books,

Robert Phillips: It depends. If fishing season opens up It might take a little longer.

Vikki J. Carter: Well, that's good because, authors or the, my listeners might not know this, but I've actually been able to write a review or an intro into both of these books, because we're talking about the publisher, Jon Gosh, who actually has been on our show a couple of times. And several of his authors from your same publishing house have also been on the show and the last two years. So Jon emailed me and said, "Oh, I have this really great book and author, I'd like you to bring on the podcast, but we want you also to read it in advance and maybe put an endorsement." And I'm like, okay, cool. And what's funny is that I don't read, I love mystery. So we want to make sure we define this is mystery, but it's wilderness mystery. Right. Is that how you define the genre?

Robert Phillips: I'd say outdoor will definitely. That's the best of it. Yeah.

Vikki J. Carter: Yeah. With hunting and fishing and all that. Now I grew up doing all that with my dad and brothers, but it's not something that I would normally read. But I fell in love with the book so much. I recognized a lot of the area. My Dad and Mom lived on moved over to the Eastern side of the mountains and they all hunted in that whole area, after he retired. So he knows the area very well. Matter of fact, if we would go to Spokane, it wasn't even near where he lived. If we ended up in Spokane, he would always say, "Why are you not coming to visit me or you're in my neck of the woods." And it's like, you're still four hours away from Spokane, Dad . It's not really your neck of the woods, you know So, so, I've been thrilled. So let's talk, tell us the titles of the books. And then let's dive in a little bit into the characters, because they're enduring. I love them.

Robert Phillips: Okay. Well, the first book is titled The Cascade Killer. And to give you just a little bit of idea what it's about, a bear hunter finds a human body part inside of a bear, and they try to determine where this bear may have come across a person. So my character is a, Washington Department Fish and Wildlife Enforcement officer or other people call him a Game Warden. He's, got 14 years on the, on the, on the, in service and he, but he travels with a yellow lab named Jack. And, that's where the fiction comes in because I don't think any of the Game Wardens in Washington state actually are traveling with a dog. But, I write most a lot of my columns revolve around dogs. People love dogs, whether they're hunters or not, they need their need their dogs.

Robert Phillips: They've got dogs or they've lived with dogs or grow up with dogs. They just love dog stories. I thought I knew I had to bring a dog into the book as part one of the characters. And so, my, my main characters' names, Luke McCain, and some of your older listeners might recognize that as the main character's name and the rifleman, that was a old series cut, starring Chuck Connors. And it was a Western. And, when I was trying to figure out a name for my character, I thought Luke would be a good first name. And then I was struggling to find a spec last name. And then I thought, what about McCain And we can kind of play up on that, you know, all the rifleman deal. So, that's worked out kind of, kind of well as well, but, anyway, he then kind of gets thrust into trying to find, number one, this woman's body that, from the bear.

Robert Phillips: And then he gets figures out, that there may be a serial killer involved dumping bodies in the Eastern side of the Cascade Mountains. He gets, I wouldn't say hooked up, but I said introduced to, and then kind of works in partnership with a, an attractive FBI agent named Sara Sinclair. And, they worked together very well. And, they go about trying to figure out who the killer is. And, as bodies, more and more bodies are found in the cascades of these women. And, along the way, he has little side jonts, you know, just doing his regular job. He catches some bear poachers and he helps find somebody to escape from jail. And he does a few other things like that, just in his regular daily job. And, and it's pretty believable. I think one of my reviewers, and thank you Vikki for on of the reviewers . I appreciate that very much, very kind words. One other reviewr was Rich Phillips, no relation to me, but he's a former Game Warden in Washington state. He reviews for the International Game Warden Magazine, and he said it was one of the, the most true to form or realistic books he's read in a long time about Game Wardens. And that made me feel good. He gave me a very nice review. So

Vikki J. Carter: And what I really enjoyed about it. If you don't mind me interrupting, you really put a light on a Game Warden in a super positive, helpful viewpoint, you know, cause you know, we live in the Northwest and there's always these tussles about, you know, hunting and fishing and conservation and you know, there's two schools of thought on all of that. And you don't show a negative side of it. Luke is so believable and he really loves what he's doing and his mission of what he's doing is so important to our environment. And it's almost like an educational piece for people that don't understand what their roles are. And I think that's so important because even I have times where I'm like, I wonder if hunting's really something we should still be doing and then reading your book. I'm like, there you bring in that aspect of yeah. There's value to it. There's reasons why, but you're not preaching it so great.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. Well I, and I think it allows people to kind of appreciate, the job of, you know, the Game Wardens today and what they're up against.

Vikki J. Carter: Yeah. Especially book two, I'll say. When you get into book two, definitely brought that into play.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. Yeah. And so, one, one of the guys that kind of, advise me as I was writing, the first book was a former Game Warden, his good friend from here and I just run some things by him and he he'd kind of keep me on the right where I needed to be in. And he'd helped me with the details of what was on a Game Warden's belt and what was in their truck and just to kind of make it, you know, realistic as can't be. I really appreciated his, his insight and help to, and one of the things I wrote about, was how, you know, Game Wardens, they probably they're maybe kind of looked down upon by some of the other police agencies in the state, but they come up against more people that are harmed potentially dangerous than any of the other police officers in the state. Because the hunters are armed, a lot of time anglers are alarmed, so it's a dangerous deal and they've gotta be paying attention all the time. Luckily, Luke has, Jack with him and Jack has kind of, kind of helped save the day a couple of times. So yeah,

Vikki J. Carter: Jack, you really did well with having Jack in there you're a hundred percent right about the dog aspect because the minute I met Jack, I was like, okay, now I really love this. I'm a dog lover. I have two. My listeners know that occasionally they appear on the podcast by accident, . I loved that Luke's, reaction with Jack is, is really, perfect for a dog owner. I mean, he's, he's still says funniest thing. So I'm, so listeners you'll love it. If you're a dog lover, you'll love their relationship.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. Well, I take a lot of that from my, just my personal life. Cause I've, I've been a, had dogs on my whole life and every one of them has had a unique personality and it's kinda melted it all together in Jack. And one thing lab lovers will know, know for sure is that they love to eat. Jack is always interested in finding something to eat in whatever going on. So

Vikki J. Carter: I don't talk about my dogs too much, but I do have a mixed breed. I two rescues. And, one, we don't know what she is. I know she's a beagle and she might be a pug, but, she's always on me about food and when it's six o'clock in the mornings when she wants to eat, so she's trained me, she will nudge me into the kitchen and five o'clock is her dinner time. So, you know, if I'm doing something else, which I typically I'm, she'll sit there and just whine and cry until I feed her . Yeah. They're spoiled my dogs.

Robert Phillips: You can set your watch by them . Right.

Vikki J. Carter: Totally, totally could set a clock to it. So, all right. So we've talked about the writing process. You've touched on your publishing. You've actually had a very great run. Unlike many of my authors that have come on the podcast or even myself, I'm working on books that I don't even know where I'm going to publish or how I'm going to publish. So you have landed very well. So congratulations. And I think a lot of that is inspiring to me because you have used so much of your background as, you know, writing articles and, and what you love. And that's what you're writing on now is so exciting. You talked a little bit about research. I'm currently in a total research state of mind these days. How you, you utilized individuals, experts to get some research. Were there other ways that you had to do some research? You want to talk about that?

Robert Phillips: Yeah. I'll be honest with you. I'm lazy when it comes to that. Most people are. Yeah. I just, I mean, that just doesn't interest me. And so a lot of times I just spew out, you know, some facts and figures, like, you know, there's a a hundred thousand acres in the national forest where my, my guy patrols, well, you know, you need to kind of, double-check your facts. And I talk about the missing and murdered indigenous women, native American women. I had to go back and make sure I had is right on that number in case somebody checked me. And I had my Gazzettee r, it's in pieces. I looked at my Gazzetter so much just double check and forest service roads and make sure that, and that's been kind of fun because then now when the, after somebody reads it, they'll come up to me and they'll go, "Oh man, when he was going up, you know, Spring Creek Road and blah, blah, blah, I've been up that trail."

Robert Phillips: That's exactly right. You know, and it's funny how people will check that stuff and, and but they can picture, picture exactly where you're talking about. And I think that's, what's one thing that's made the book, I guess, enjoyable and likable to some many people as they can picture. Right. What you're talking about, the road, the trail, the leg, even the restaurants and some of those things. So, yeah, but, the other thing is, I don't know, 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, if I was writing this book, I would have more problems because if you need to find something, you can just Google it. You know I mean, I had no clue when I was starting to write this book. I was absolute dummy. I didn't ask any questions. I didn't talk to anybody. I just started writing in about, I wrote, wrote, wrote, wrote, wrote, wrote, wrote, and I thought, Oh my gosh, I gotta be getting close to the end here. You know, just as far as how big a book has. So, I just Googled how many words in a book Well, you know, a mystery novel has probably minimum 50,000, probably more like 60 or 70,000 words. And the funny thing is then it said, if you're asking, you've probably only written about 25 thousand words and I looked down at the bottom of the screen and sure enough, I was at 25,000 words.

Vikki J. Carter: Oh, that's so funny. You're in the middle.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. So I go, okay, I'm going to have to write some more and more storylines now. I love it.

Vikki J. Carter: That's such an awesome example though. And you know, everybody is lazy with research. The fact is though that I love, and, and I will pick on Google and Wikipedia all the time because my background is a Librarian. So, we are the original search engines. We were trained before Google came along. So, and I, as I talked to you about a little bit, I'm starting a whole YouTube channel on this whole topic and a companion guide for authors on how to research. But most of us, even myself, I'm pretty lazy when it comes to my first original researching. But what you did correctly was go back and check because I can't count how many time authors had told me, Oh, I just didn't check my facts or I didn't check one particular fact in my book. And guess what a reader called him out on that one thing.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. Yeah. That was that I've been called out before and my newspaper columns and stuff.

Vikki J. Carter: So you, you have that experience. It hurts and it stings, but you know what it could be easily remedied. I tell authors all the time and my students, because I work as a faculty member for a university, you know, put a placeholder, but make sure you remember to go back and check it you'll wish you did later.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. The current book I'm writing, there's one, I'd got a double-check, it's a motel in Ellensburg off of, the highway on an exit. And I don't, I just made all that up, highlighted it in yellow to note, tell myself, okay, sooner or later you gotta go back and double check.

Vikki J. Carter: And that's where like Google maps is useful for researching and even something I taught. I'm going to talk about on my YouTube channel. Eventually this year, something that I discovered that is really valuable for researching. So I'm giving away. One of my tips is YouTube. YouTube actually has a tremendous amount of people that will go out and video like motels or hotels when they go visit. Or when we could travel, there were a lot of travel channel or travel "tube" people and they would video put massive videos up and you could actually go and research a whole lot about a particular area based on what might be on YouTube. So that's another good outcome, but Google maps is very good for that too.

Vikki J. Carter: A lot of people don't think about YouTube for researching. It's one of my favorite places to, and it started getting better. A lot more stuff is being put up there. That's helpful. So, well, why don't we jump into my favorite part of the podcast is when the authors read a section of their book. So, Rob first set the stage for us just a little bit, let us know whatever context you need to put around Luke, before you share with us the story or the part you're going to read, and I'm going to go quietly while you do that.

Robert Phillips: All right. Well, one thing we did answer first is the second book title. Oh we didn't. And I'm sorry, go ahead. That's okay. It's a, it's called Cascade Vengeance. And, it's basically the storyline is, people may or may not know that there are a lot of illegal pot fields up in the Cascades and, you know, they just, it's kind of unseen. And since, marijuana is become legalized in Washington State, you know, I think people think, well, those pot fields have gone away when the case is no, it's, they're still around. And a lot of times they bring in, illegal people to work in the, in the pot fields for, to farm, to do other things. And, this book is revolves around somebody who is killing the workers in these illegal pot fields. And, Luke and Jack are called in to try to find them on the last hunter. They ended up in a legal pot field. They discover a couple of dead pot field workers, and that leads one thing leads to another. And pretty soon he's thrown in the investigation of trying to figure out why, who and why. these pot field workers are being killed and who's killing them and, and, kind of follows that investigation along. So, that's the Cascade Vengeance , that's kind of the gist of the second book, Cascade Vengeance and it, yeah. It's out now and,

Vikki J. Carter: I love that theme and I think it's very important that you highlighted that fact that there is still so much illegal activity that's happening in our forest and you really highlighted the damage that they do. It's not a pretty thing for the forest at all; or the environment around it. It's all toxic basically.

Robert Phillips: Yeah. That's one thing I did Google. I looked up several newspaper articles on the illegal pot fields and what's happening. And, you know, they, they use intense, fertilizers that will get washed into the watersheds. And, you know, they just make them, they leave all their things up there that all the tools and all their supplies and stuff and just make messes and, just leave it. And, so not only is it the, the issue with the illegal marijuana, but it's everything that comes along with it. And, so maybe that maybe calls out, calls it out a little bit. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Vikki J. Carter: And then one other thing I'm gonna tell you, while we're still here before free start reading. I'm starting to really love wilderness adventures and mysteries, but I have a total fear from the time I was a child of going hiking and I might've, you might've heard this on my podcasts, going hiking in the, here in the beautiful Pacific Northwest and discovering a dead body, me being the one to discover it. It's like my number one fear. I still hike, but my husband, I don't do extensive hikes and we don't do overnight hiking, so every time there's a body that gets discovered the forest. I'm like, Oh man, he's playing on my feet. I love it.

Robert Phillips: I always figured that sooner or later in all my travels all stumble across a dead body too. I don't have a fear, but it won't surprise me if it happens. I hope it doesn't happen.

Vikki J. Carter: I think I fear it just because I'm like, what do you do Oh, horrible. And then the author mode would go, I mean, I need to know how this happened. Why did it happen? Who did it? Let's figure this out. I love it. All right. So I'm going to go ahead and go quiet. Tell us which book you're going to read from and set the stage.

Robert Phillips: I'm going to read from The Cascade Killer and I'm going to read the prologue and the first chapter. So you can kind of get a gist how my character Luke McCain gets, thrown into the investigation and how it gets started.

Robert Phillips: So, the prologue: " There's a bear," Tanner Jamison says from behind his binoculars. Washington spring bear season had just opened and Tanner, along with his father, Eric we're watching a clear-cut where they had seen bears on two pre-season scouting trips. They had been looking at the edges of the clear-cut with Tanner spotted, a black object he thought what was a burn stump until it moved after a few minutes of watching the bear. The two put together a plan, they hoped we'd get him within 250 yards of the bruin. And then they were off. The stock worked out to perfection.

Robert Phillips: It took them a little longer than they estimated as the hillside dropped straight down into a small creek that was overgrown with alders and brush, making the walking about impossible. But they made it through. And after a climb to their predetermined shooting spot, they crept up to the break of the hill. And again, started searching the clear-cut with their binoculars.

Robert Phillips: "There it is," Eric said after about thirty seconds. "He's coming out from behind that little fur tree, just up from where we saw him before." Tanner went prone, using his backpack. With one shot from his Ruger 7mm, the bear dropped and didn't move.

Robert Phillips: "Great shot s on! Eric said, excitedly patting us on the back. The elation would only last a, just a minute or two as after they dressed the animal. after Tanner accidentally nicked the bare stomach with his knife. They stared in disbelief at the contents that came oozing out.

Robert Phillips: "What the heck?" the elder Jamison said, he stared at the bloody mix of meat grass coming out of the dead bear's stomach.

Robert Phillips: Floating in the gook appeared to be a human ear. His son gagged a few times and said, "That can't be an ear, can it?" As the stomach's contents kept draining out. There were pieces of blue mixed in with blood - red bile and goo.

Robert Phillips: "I think it is," said Eric. "And that blue stuff looks like shards of clothing." "Do you think the bear killed someone and ate them?" Tanner asked. "I don't know, but we need to call 911 right away."

Robert Phillips: Chapter One: Interstate five heading South out of Olympia was one big traffic jam. Just about any time. It was no different this day. In fact, if anything, it might've been worse. Look, McCain looked ahead at this long string of cars, all with their brake lights, shining red and felt like screaming after spending two days in the Olympia, he wanted to get out of this rat race and be home time to see a dog and get some good sound, sleep in his own bed.

Robert Phillips: Unfortunately, the way the bumper to bumper traffic was moving on the sixth lane, it might be morning before he made it back to Yakima. As a veteran police officer with the Washington Department, Fish and Wildlife, McCain had been in Olympia for meetings with other fish and wildlife officers from around the state. The meetings were held quarterly. So officers from each of the six regional headquarters could train and discuss any trends in the world of fish and wildlife protection. He was thinking about the meetings and how he was looking forward to getting back to the east side of the state when he glanced down at the speedometer. Was he really going 22 miles an hour in a 70? "Come on!" he yelled as he pounded the palm of his hand on the steering wheel. Traffic finally started picking up faster than funeral procession speed around Grand Mound

Robert Phillips: and by the time he hits in Centralia, he along with about 900 other cars, were doing close to the speed limit. With another two hours or more on the road before he got home McCain decided to stop and Chehalis to grab a burger and get rid of some liquid he'd consumed during the meetings that morning. At six-foot-almost-five and 227 pounds, in top shape from a regular workout routine that included both cardio and weightlifting, McCain made a pretty daunting first impression. He had worked hard to make himself someone that only the very stupid or very drunk would want to mess with.

Robert Phillips: People in police work did put their lives on the line every day. But what the general public didn't realize was that the fish and wildlife police officers or game wardens have many people still call them, or maybe at the highest risk of them, all studies show that nearly 80 percent of the people they contacted every day, including many anglers and virtually all hunters, were armed.

Robert Phillips: That, and the desire to be able to hike some of the mountains

Robert Phillips: he hunted each fall, kept him motivated to stay fit. McCain , pulled into the Wendy's and Chehalis and order to double with cheese, hold the onions and pickles, with fries and a Frosty. He was calculating how many miles he was going to have to run to work off those calories when the phone rang.

Robert Phillips: The screen read YAKIMA COUNTY SHERIFF. "McCain," he said into the phone.

Robert Phillips: "Is this the rifleman?" the scratchy voice asked.

Robert Phillips: "I wish you'd stop calling me that," McCain said. At 37 McCain was too young to have ever watched the 1950s TV series that starred Chuck Connors as a lawman in the old West. Instead of a sidearm, Conner used a special lever- action Winchester to handle all his shooting business. And business with good on the weekly TV series. There was always a bad guy or two needed gutting down.

Robert Phillips: Connors' character's name was Lucas McCain, and the TV show was called The Rifleman. Somewhere along the line, one of the older deputies in the sheriff's department had noticed that the WDFW enforcement officer shared his name what's the TV character and the nickname landed whether the real- life McCain likes it or not.

Robert Phillips: "Yeah. Yeah," the deputy on the other end of the line said. "This Williams. We got a strange one developing up near Chinook Pass and we definitely going to need some assistance from you on that spoiled dog of yours."

Robert Phillips: "Oh, yeah? What you got?"

Robert Phillips: "Some hunters shot a black bear this morning as while field dressing it discovered a human ear in the bear's stomach," William said.

Robert Phillips: "An ear? Where's the rest of the body?" McCain asked.

Robert Phillips: "That's the unknown. It looks like there were some particles of clothing in the stomach contents too, but there weren't any other identified body parts the hunters could see. They did say it was a bloody mess."

Robert Phillips: "It's rare for a black bear to attack a human, but I guess it could happened."

Robert Phillips: "Hard to tell, but you think Jack could backtrack the bear to and wherever might be left in the body?"

Robert Phillips: "Probably. It'd definitely definitely be worth a try. I'm in Chehalis, and on my way home from Olympia. Even with light traffic over the pass, I'm still two hours from Yakima. I have to grab Jack, so it'll be closer to three. And we'll be losing daylight pretty fast by then."

Robert Phillips: "Just get here as quick as you can," the deputy said, and he clicked off.

Robert Phillips: McCain grabbed his food, jumped into his rig and headed down I-5 to the cutoff to Yakima via Highway 12. As he drove he thought more about the call from Williams. Hearing of someone finding body parts in a bear's stomach was a first for him. He wondered how it had happened.

Robert Phillips: McCain had subconsciously bumped his speed up as he pondered the ear in the bear. When he looked down he was doing 20 over the speed limit in that stretch of the highway. He was driving his state-issued police truck which included a siren and lights in the grill, but he had decided they weren't necessary. The WDFW insignia on the doors of his tan truck would tell State Patrol and local deputies he was a brother law enforcement officer, but as he thought about more of the details he'd received from Williams, he went ahead and turned on the lights and pushed the F-150 a bit harder.

Robert Phillips: As he approached each little settlement along the way, he'd slow some and then roll along about 80 miles per hour until he hit the next small town.

Robert Phillips: Once he hit Randle, he intentionally slowed and watched the edge of the highway.

Robert Phillips: From here to Packwood and beyond, a large and growing herd of elk had taken up residents, and they loved feeding in the grass along the highway. The last thing he needed right now was the smack at 600-pound elk. First, he would never live it down in the circles of his fellow WDFW officers, but more importantly, he didn't need to be delayed by a collision with a critter nearly the size of a horse.

Robert Phillips: He made good time getting over White Pass and soon was pulling into his driveway. McCain lived outside of Yakima in an area known as Lower Naches. When he parked the truck he looked over at the neighbor's house and out the door came a blur of yellow and gold. His dog Jack stayed with Jessie Myers and her son, Austin when McCain had to out of town overnight .

Robert Phillips: He was thankful for this option, rather than having to kennel his dog someplace. Twelve-year-old Austin loved Jack and treated him probably better than McCain did . The boy played fetch with him, and Jessie was a sucker for Jack's big brown Labrador retriever eyes. All Jack had to do was gaze at her with a longing look, and she'd give him a bite of a cookie or some other treat that he'd gobble up.

Robert Phillips: "Hey boy," McCain said as the dog came over and got the obligatory belly rub, ear scratching, a few lugs around the neck. Jack was a big Lab, tipping the scales at just over a hundred pounds. And it wasn't a soft hundred. He was solid as a rock, strong as an oxen, and could run down a wounded rooster pheasant in nothing flat. He'd come into McCann's life as an eight- wee- old ball of fur , with feet too big and soft floppy ears. As they always do, the pup grew fast.

Robert Phillips: And Jack was soon training to be not only McCain's hunting dog, but his partner, wildlife protection.

Robert Phillips: "What have you guys been up to?" McCain, asked the dog.

Robert Phillips: "We've been playing fetch," said Austin, who had followed the dog out the door. "And Jack's been napping too. You know... the life of a dog."

Robert Phillips: With a mop of brown hair On top of his head, the sides cut short, and the gangly build of an active boy on the verge of being a teenager, Austin was your typical country kid. If he wasn't shooting baskets at the hoop and back board in his driveway, he was throwing a baseball or football with one of his buddies. With all the video games, computers, and phones that kids were into now McCain liked seeing Austin outside getting some exercise and playing with his buddies.

Robert Phillips: Occasionally, McCain would play catch with Austin, and he would take him fishing over to the river near their house.

Robert Phillips: Austin's father had divorced his mother three years before and wasn't around much, so McCain tried to give the boys some guy time, as often as his schedule allowed. Of course it helped that there was pretty good attachment that had developed between Austin and Jack.

Robert Phillips: "I do know how dogs are," McCain said as he handed Austin a fifty-dollar bill. "Thanks so much for looking after Jack. And please tell your mom, thanks too. I'd like to hang and chat, but Jack and I are needed up near Chinook Pass right away."

Robert Phillips: "Really?" Austin asked. " What's going on?" The neighbor boy was always interested in what McCain was doing with his job.

Robert Phillips: "Don't know all the details yet, but as soon as I know, I'll fill you in. Thanks again, Austin." He patted his right hand on his thigh and Jack fell in at a heel, right next to McCain as he headed into the house.

Robert Phillips: Ten minutes later, with the big yellow dog sitting next to him in the passenger seat of the Ford pickup, McCain backed out of the drive and they're headed West. In the quick turnaround in the house McCain had changed out of his standard uniform- khakis and the tan button up- shirt with his name stitch on one side, his WDFW badge on the other- and jumped into what he called his "field" uniform. He still wore his tan shirt and badge, but he put on his Wranglers and his favorite pair of Kennetrek hunting boots. His daily uniform also included utility belt which he always wore. The belt held his holster Glock semi-automatic pistol in .45 caliber, an ASP collapsible baton, pepper, spray, a Taser, a flashlight and handcuffs.

Robert Phillips: As he headed out the door, he also grabbed his backpack, ready to go in a moment's notice. The backpacks included just about everything a person might need to survive a night or two in the mountains.

Robert Phillips: The pack held rain gear, an extra couple layers of polar fleece, waterproof stocking hat and gloves, some freeze dried food, three bottles of water, a backpacker's stove, a few energy bars and some special dog bars for Jack. For safety and communication, he carried a GPS unit for marking and tracking his movement, a handheld radio, and his cell phone. In the storage bin of his truck, McCain always kept a sleeping bag rated to minus 20 degrees, a packable one-man waterproof tent, a down vest and a heavy coat. If he thought he was going to need that stuff tonight, there was room in his pack for it too.

Robert Phillips: "What do you think boy?" McCain asked Jack as they ran westbound on Highway 410. The dog turned and looked at him, barked and then went back to watching the road.

Robert Phillips: So that kind of gets you an idea of where the book is going.

Vikki J. Carter: I love it. And that was the chapter that, that hooked me on Luke and Jack I'm telling you . and I know that, Olympia drive, like the back of my hand. And you described it so well, any of you, people outside of Washington that make you want to move here I think twice because traffic is ridiculous, at least on the side of the mountains.

Robert Phillips: It's like any other big city. It's just got lots of people. Lots of cars. Yeah,

Vikki J. Carter: Sure does. Well, thanks for sharing that section. I hope listeners, you totally fell in love with Luke and Jack, like I did. Cause I did on the first chapter. I'm like, I like this guy. Let's see how it goes. And, and he just develops to be a really good character. So Rob, as we close out the podcast for this time around, cause I think we'll probably end up having you back after a couple more books, cause this has been so much fun. I'd like to catch up with you, later. give us a little bit of advice if you were talking, you know, you're talking to me, author who hasn't published officially yet. What would you say to somebody like me?

Robert Phillips: Well, as you kinda alluded to just now, I think you want to make your characters believable and likable. And that's what I tried to do with my characters and I, I seem to have succeeded at least from the input I'm getting from the people that are reading the book. That would be, that would be one tip. I had no clue what I was doing. I know you've talked to many authors that self published. I would go with a, if you can, if you can get a publisher interested, I would definitely go with a publisher. Yes, you may not earn quite as much money, but but they earn the money they, they receive. My publisher has got lots of contexts. He knew exactly what to do with the distributor and how to get everything into Amazon and going, and he had tips for getting things rolling and getting reviews in and it just, I think it really, helped kind of speed things up in the success of, of my books. And, it's just very appreciative cause I was totally, totally, totally, ignorant on all of that when I, when I first started writing.

Vikki J. Carter: And that's how I started this podcast. I don't know if you listened far back enough to hear the story, but two years ago when I started the podcast, I decided I was going to start researching, on how to do all this besides writing, but also publishing. And I started to ask authors. I only knew two authors in my area that I knew face-to-face and I asked them and they gave me such great advice. And then I started to ask more authors what they suggested. And I'm like, this could be a really good podcast. I can't be the only one out there that has these questions and sure enough, there we are.

Robert Phillips: Well, I wish I would have found your podcast before I started writing or as I was writing that sure. It would have helped me.

Vikki J. Carter: The craft is always something we can work on. Right

Robert Phillips: No doubt about it. Yeah. I'd like I said, I've been writing for a long time, but, or I sure learned a lot in this process, that's for sure.

Vikki J. Carter: Well, Rob, I absolutely enjoyed our visit together. Thank you for sharing your books with us. Thank you for including me on, the pre-release readings and I hope I get to be a part of the next ones. cause I have fallen in love with Luke. I'll be honest. I am married. Thank goodness. But Luke would be on the top of my list if he was a real life guy. And so, I will be in touch with you to have you back on the show and there's a couple more books out. I would appreciate that very much. And I thank you so much for having me today.

Speaker 1: Thank you for listening to the podcast. I hope you enjoyed it as much as we did? Make sure you jump on the show notes and find the author, buy their books, write a review. And most importantly, you can find out more about me and my projects at one of my two websites, <https://www.squishpen.com> or <https://www.theauthorslibrarian.com>. And until next time, this is Vikki J Carter, The Author's Librarian signing off.