



Chances are that if you grew up in the '80s, you remember the Conan the Barbarian series. From 1980-1996, local author Leonard (Len) Carpenter wrote eleven of the Conan bestsellers, making him the most prolific author in the series. Originally conceived by Robert E. Howard—one of the best-selling fantasy writers of all time—back in the 1930's, more than fifty Conan novels have been published making Conan a fixture in pop culture, including comics, cartoons, toys, and two major motion pictures featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger, plus spinoffs.

Conan's exploits in the fictional Hyborian age began as short stories in 1930's pulp magazines. They were reprinted by fans in the '40s and '50s due to creator Bob Howard's bold, vivid prose, long after he died in 1935.

Carpenter read Howard's unsold novel, "Hour of the Dragon" (later published as "Conan the Conqueror") at age ten, and was hooked. In the '60s came "Lord of the Rings," fantasy gaming, and flashy paperbacks of "lost" Conan stories, some added by historian and fictioneer L. Sprague de Camp.

"By 1980 I had my first modern fantasy yarns published and won a \$1,000 literary prize. I landed the Conan contract, so Sprague and wife Catherine backed me for the next ten books. I was able to draw on legend and history from the stone age to gunpowder, channeling Conan with wild invention and social insights. Mine were the first and last novels of the Tor paperback series, from 'Conan the Renegade' to 'Conan, Lord of the Black River.'"

Although fans still reach out to Carpenter in hopes of resurrecting Conan, the rights are locked up in legal battles.

Following his fifteen-plus-year career as a full-time author, Carpenter obtained a computer writing certificate from Cal Poly and became a successful technical writer,

and he continued to write short fiction and was published in several anthologies. Most recently, he sold and published the historical thriller "Lusitania Lost" in 2017, which is also available as an audiobook.

There is plenty up next for Carpenter. He's become an advocate for longevity and plans to live well into his hundreds. He's currently seeking a publisher for his latest contemporary fiction work entitled "Tropic of Cuba." It's a speculative semi-fictional account of discovering the fountain of youth. Carpenter has released it as a serialized story on Amazon's new Kindle Vella platform.

"'Tropic of Cuba' doesn't fit easily into a single genre. But it contains thrills, humor, and insights that can inform, and literally lengthen, or save your life."

Born in 1948 and a graduate of UC at Berkeley, Carpenter is the widowed father of twin daughters and a son. His travels include a nine-month bicycle circuit of Europe with his late wife Cheryl, and ten trips to Cuba culminating in marriage to his Guantanamo bride, Yasnai. You can keep up with him and his latest exploits at LenCarpenter.com. **SLO LIFE**



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