

## **From lawyer to mystery novelist, Palos Verdes Estate's Don Davis keeps readers guessing**

- [Michael Hixon](#)
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For more than six years, Palos Verdes Estate's resident Don Davis has been a securities lawyer by day and a murder mystery writer by night with stories inspired by his career and the South Bay.

Under the pseudonym, Davis MacDonald, Davis has written six books in “The Judge Series,” beginning with “The Hill,” which he wrote in 2012. In “The Hill,” “Judge,” as he is known in the series, finds the body of a teen he knows and uncovers greed, corruption and murder on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

His latest book, “The Strand,” is loosely inspired by the McMartin Preschool child molestation trial in Manhattan Beach that took the country by storm in the 1980s.

Back when I was a young lawyer, I thought these people were being tried in the press and they really didn't have the capability to get a fair jury and due process at the trial because the press was slamming them all across the country,” recalled Davis.

While “The Strand” is not specifically about the McMartin trial, but like the rest of “The Judge Series,” the novel focuses on issues that Davis is concerned with.

“The Strand” deals with the First and Sixth Amendments and touches on the #MeToo movement. The murder mystery in “Cabo” surrounds human trafficking in Mexico. “Silicon Beach,” set in Santa Monica, touches on homelessness. Newport Beach is the setting of “The Bay,” which looks at how Muslims are treated in America.

“I start with significant experience that I've had or I've read about that's affected my view of the world to give me some juice to write a story about that,” Davis said. “Then I search for a social issue that I think that's relevant to this first quarter of the 21st century.”

Davis, who also wraps history lessons inside his mysteries, added, “I spend about a year on a book. I don’t want to waste, invest that time to write a book unless I’ve got something to say that’s relevant to people.”

Davis grew up in West Covina and attended USC Law School where he finished No. 1 in his class in 1969. He met his first wife at USC, she was a lawyer, and after their marriage they looked for a place to live.

“We took a drive up and down the coast, from Malibu all the way down... came down to the Esplanade and looked up to the hill, 'This is it,'” he said.

They first lived in an apartment on Palos Verdes Boulevard until then bought their first home. In 1975, they bought a Spanish architecturally inspired home, which was built in 1929, which he still occupies.

Davis said “The Hill” is “very autobiographical” so much so he said “my wife is a little embarrassed.”

Davis has been married three times. He married his current wife 26 years ago. In total he has seven children, including three with his current wife. In the book, he falls in love with a woman two decades younger, and he proposes to her two weeks later.

“I went through a similar process in my life,” he said.

Davis has built a successful practice as a securities, business and international commerce lawyer. His office was in downtown L.A. for many years until he moved it to a 60-foot yacht in Marina del Rey. So now he only has to commute from Malaga Cove.

Davis has been writing prospectus reports and other legalese for his clients for years but enjoys using a “different brain set” to write fiction.

“I let the narrative flow out of me,” Davis said. “It’s very different than writing legal, it’s a different process, it’s relaxing, it’s very different than the analytical work I have to do during the day. I very much enjoy it.”

Davis is currently writing his seventh novel, “The Lake,” which is set in Lake Arrowhead and focuses on the death of a friend and lawyer of Judge’s. “The Lake” is expected to be published in late 2019.

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