

Interview for Book Club Reading List

<https://bookclubreading.com/author-interview-john-trudel/>

Privacy Wars

Q: Synopsis?

The 21st Century sees a return of the totalitarian horrors that once caused genocide and World War. Big Brother is ascendant, aided by technology. Everyone is watched. Liberty has been traded for safety and both are lost. Personal privacy has been stolen and must be recovered.

Young scientist WILLIAM GILES fights for freedom. He and his dad, IRON JOHN, a retired Special Ops Colonel, establish Cybertech. It sells security protection for private citizens.

When John is abducted and presumed dead, Cybertech is attacked from all sides. Will stands alone, tortured by remorse and falsely accused. With all he loves at risk, he runs for safety, fleeing wrongful charges, and relentlessly pursued by UN paramilitary forces.

A former student REBECCA RIDER is sent to get him to shelter. She rescues him in the high mountains. Their main allies are the *Yakuza* and her friends, an ancient cult that possesses advanced science. Both groups seek Cybertech's technology. How can either be trusted?

Can Will find redemption? Can he and Becky save Cybertech and prevent his technology from being stolen? Can liberty survive? That's the story, a Hero's Journey framed against a background of exotic locations, edgy science, societal challenges, and Global Governance.

Q: What inspired you to write this book?

I write novels "because I must," but why this one? The short answer is a confluence of three things: Knowledge, Major Trends, and a drop-dead gorgeous movie star.

Knowledge

The pundits say, "Write what you know." *Privacy Wars* is my 2nd novel published, but the first one I wrote. I had a long and rewarding career in High Technology, one which spanned work in ELINT (Electronic INTelligence) systems, weapons systems, communications and computers, both for the government and for commercial firms. That's how I made my living.

All my novels include science-based suspense and high concepts. Modern technology has allowed great advances in human quality of life, but it is very much a two-edged sword. The story of civilization is one of biblical conflict between good and evil. The more successful and powerful we become as a society, the greater the stakes.

Tends

God gave us free will and the Ten Commandments, and our Founding Fathers gave us a Constitutional Republic that was a “5,000 Year Leap.” But the human condition is what it is: Humans are fallible and prone to make foolish mistakes. Civilizations rise and fall, and it takes an advanced, ethical, honest society to manage powerful science and technology.

My characters struggle with this and so do we in the real world. Modern communications and jet aircraft have shrunk the world and allowed prosperity, but jets can be flown into buildings and seamless digital databases and pervasive communications can enable lasting Tyranny far beyond the wildest dreams of the Gestapo or KGB.

Today people talk about Tyranny, the “Total Surveillance Society,” and “Prisons without Walls,” not in novels or some faraway place with a strange sounding name, but close. The old novel *1984* is seeing resurgence, SkyNet with intelligent armed robots is on the near horizon, and political systems are overstressed. We thought the Cold War was over and Communism was defeated, but instead events are starting to look like a repeat of the 1930s, with various forms of socialism ascendant and ancient evils returning. We live in interesting times.

The intrusiveness of today’s technology and the risks of misuse is a fertile ground for novels. *Privacy Wars* has won three National Awards, gets “5-stars,” and is being discussed as the novel that predicted the NSA and IRS scandals.

The Drop-Dead Gorgeous Movie Star

All my novels start with a disclaimer, but I might put doppelgangers of the things my life touched in novels. Since you asked, hang on....

Back in the day, I gave a keynote speech on innovation at an event called “The National Invention Convention.” They decided to present *numerous* awards that year and were short of moderators, so I was tapped to present some minor awards. The centerpiece of the evening was the Bulbie Award for the “Greatest Living Inventor.”

The Bronze Trophy given is shaped like a lightbulb in honor of Thomas Alva Edison. The award went to the actress Hedy Lamarr. She was alive, but infirmed and a recluse, so her son accepted.

My jaw dropped when I heard her story. Ms. Lamarr had a degree in physics. In Hitler’s Germany, she was arm candy for a Prussian Count who made weapons for The Fuhrer. She sat in on his meetings as World War II was planned and was horrified.

Her Hollywood friends helped her escape with a plotline that involved bribes, drugging her maid, forged documents, and a midnight run. When she got to the United States, she tried to warn us of the impending threat. She wanted to work and help counter Hitler’s war machine.

Our Generals and political leaders told her not to fret. She was safe. A beautiful woman like her would do much better in Hollywood than in a research lab. So they sent her away.

Women tend to persist. Now famous and still worried about impending war, Hedy and her piano player invented a secure communication system (we now call it “spread spectrum”). They got a patent. She took it to the government and said, “There is going to be a horrible war, and this will help you win. You can talk in secret and use it to control missiles and torpedoes.”

Ms. Lamarr GAVE the rights to the government for the war effort. Our leaders were dubious. An actress and a piano player? Yeah, right!

They thanked her, classified it, and tucked it all away, just like in an Indiana Jones movie.

Our government didn’t ever use her patent until the Cuban Missile crisis, but today it has expired and is how all cell phones work. *Who could make this stuff up?* Bismarck once said, “God protects fools and Americans.”

We won the war anyway. A large part of the reason might be the Germans and Japanese, who had superior weapons at the beginning, were confident that we could never break their highly advanced automatic cypher machines.

They were wrong. I just hope Bismarck wasn’t and that God doesn’t change his mind.

Q: What topics in your book or background do you think book clubs would find interesting?

Well, the main topic is "Big Brother," the intrusiveness of surveillance and how it threatens freedom. That's the hottest subject for interviews and discussions with my fans, the one that comes up the most.

Some like the settings, characters, and the history contained in the back story. Some like the dialogue. Women tend to like my novels, and not just for the suspense. I was asked to join Romance Writers of America, and I did. It’s a good organization.

One of the National Awards that *Privacy Wars* won was "cross genre." Another award was for being thought provoking.

Novels are subjective, my books have the “look inside” feature activated on Amazon, and the first chapters are posted on www.johntrudel.com. So perhaps the best answer is to just take a look. You can decide for yourself what you like the most.

Q: Tell us about your career outside of writing and how it influences your writing.

I’ve been blessed. I got to live the American dream.

I’m a kid from New Jersey. I came from an old East Coast family, once wealthy, who’d lost their money during the Great Depression. I started off picking blueberries for eight cents a pound,

eventually went to college on loans, scholarships, and fellowships, and finally got to do what I loved: Airplanes, computers, and science.

I worked for some terrific companies, and my last “real job” was as business development manager for a major research lab. That paved the way to my starting my own consulting firm, The Trudel Group. I wrote two non-fiction books, and hundreds of columns in high tech business magazines. I gave seminars, met interesting people, and saw fascinating science all over the world. I was a judge for “Outstanding Corporate Innovator” awards.

What was the best part? People paid me good money to learn things because they trusted my skills and integrity. I used to say it doesn’t get any better than that, but maybe it does.

Writing novels at a professional level is hard work and quite private. But the Author part is public and fun. I’m a pilot and I like dropping into small airports for book signings. My novels make people happy, they tell me stories, and I learn things. I do more signings at “grassroots-America” events than at bookstores. I meet interesting people, good people. It’s uplifting.

Q: Describe your style of writing.

I’ve been writing professionally for decades, and thought I was good at it. I had to be. If you are a tiny company you can’t go around to huge firms and say, “Hi, I’m a consultant from Oregon. If you pay me a bunch of money, I can help you prosper.”

Fat chance. It’s better to write books and columns, to give seminars, and to have them come to you. I wrote two successful high tech books and hundreds of popular columns. After that, I thought novels would be easy. Man, was I wrong!

It took me over a decade to break into fiction. Novelists get to deal with endless rejection. I almost gave up, but a famous writer and true gentleman, Tony Hillerman, saved me. He gave some key advice and told me his own story. The lesson was basically what Shakespeare’s Polonius said, “*To thine own self be true....*”

So I fired my agent. I stopped doing what the agents and publishers said they wanted. I worked hard to just tell the best stories I could, my own *unique* stories.

Don’t get me wrong. I took many classes and seminars. I talked with every successful author and agent who’d invest the time. I spent a lot of time studying craft. I read books about it. To write today at a professional level, you need to read everything you can and learn everything you can.

I have various techniques I use, but these would be tedious to discuss. Every successful writer has his or her own unique way to approach writing. Some successful writers do use formulas, but that’s not the type of books I write.

My books are, well, unusual. I tease my wife by reminding her that I'm a Thriller guy who was asked to join the Romance Writers of America, and did. They put a note about why I joined in their magazine. I told them I felt like the scruffy dog in *Lady and the Tramp*.

My novels don't feature cartoon heroes, antiheroes, and blood on every third page. My protagonists are exceptional people, who are way over their heads trying to cope with extraordinary challenges. My protagonists struggle to stay alive long enough long enough to solve huge problems, to have lives, and to do the right thing.

That's what I write. The risk, of course, is the ultimate fear of a novelist. *What if I put years of work into this and no one cares?* That happens most of the time, and I guess the jury is still out on me. It took the Harry Potter lady ten years to be noticed.

In the end the readers, get to decide. If enough fans like my books, post good reviews, and tell their friends, it will all turn out well. And, if not, I'm having fun, learning things, and having a great ride.

Q: Which authors have inspired you?

The top of the heap in Thrillers these days is probably defined by Vince Flynn and Brad Thor. I've read most, if not all, of their books. They are great writers, I love their books, and we're all going to miss Vince.

I used to work in the same building with Jean Auel. She came out of nowhere as a writer, got a huge advance, and started a new genre. Wow. David Morrell enjoyed early success, but was banished to the wilderness and worked for ten years to get back on the top-seller lists. That man had some really interesting stories to tell about the profession. Clive Cussler and Dean Koontz deserve a mention too, the former for defining a new type of hero, and the latter for breaking out of the science fiction ghetto where he was typecast and ending my inclination to write SF.

Mentioning science fiction, I've got to give a tip of the hat to Jerry Pournelle. Jerry has blurbed all my books. He is likely the bestselling SF author of all time, right up there with Heinlein.

I've already mentioned Tony Hillerman. Without him, my novels would likely not exist. There was a group who clustered at the Hillerman conferences. Joe Badal and Craig Johnson are great writers, and both inspired me. Don Bendell is a personal friend, a Green Beret who came out of Vietnam badly injured, rehabbed himself, and is now a Karate Grand Master who owns Karate schools and writes Westerns.

There are others, too many to list, but my idol will always be the science-suspense writer Dr. Michael Crichton. He was amazing, and he did it the hard way. Each one of his books was different. He knew his stuff. Not just the writing, but the science, the medicine, the politics, the human frailties, the risks of politicized science, and so much more.

What's his best book? Most would likely say *Timeline* or *Jurassic Park*, but my vote is *State of Fear*. This prescient 2004 book anticipated the “never waste a crisis” mode of government, and radical green Climate Alarmism. Crichton showed a lot of courage in writing this. He wound up getting death threats and being all but blacklisted by Hollywood.

Senator Inhofe wrote a book *The Greatest Hoax* that credits Dr. Crichton with helping to prevent disastrous policy. I think in 50 years *State of Fear* will be seen as his best work, and I regret that I never got to meet him.

[Back to Main Page](#)