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Talk With An Author

Why Hailey Got Flak

By DAN McCOSH

In Detroit, a town that shows the same motorcycle movie in 20 movie houses concurrently, a man who writes books is an oddity.

Arthur Hailey wrote a book about Detroit and became a celebrity.

By the time he got to Twelve Mall in Southfield, he had made the front pages of both dailies, been analyzed, reviewed, interviewed and excerpted.

His book, "Wheels," had already sold close to 10,000 copies in the city, an all-time record. General Motors, Ford and Chrysler were supposed to have run out and bought a dozen copies apiece, just like those generals running out to buy the "Pentagon Papers."

SO WHEN he sat down next to Free Press Columnist Bob Talbert to talk to some of his public, he might have been a little jaded. His agent said it was the 90th time he had been interviewed that day.

Instead, he fielded the questions with genuine interest and startled Woody Miller, president of Avis Rent a Car, when he recognized him as one of the people he had interviewed two years before when he researched the book.

With revelations of corporate secrets, social commentary and "name games" crammed in the pages of the best seller, what was the most asked question about "Wheels"?

"Actually," Hailey said, "Most people remark on that statement about Detroit drivers being the worst in the country."

He said he didn't really

drive much in Detroit, calling the statement "unresearched," but once he had difficulty changing lanes on the John Lodge with his blinker on.

HE SAID HE had developed a reputation for not carrying tales which gave him access to the sources he interviewed in Detroit before writing his book.

"I do research for about two years and take a year to write the book," he said.

"As a fiction writer, I can guarantee anonymity. I never misrepresent myself, everybody I talk to knows I'm doing research for a book. Of course, sometimes they forget..."

"I write about people against the background of technology," he continued.

"I started to write a book about auto sales, but my publisher said why not the whole auto industry? So that is what I did."

While he was autographing books, no less than four car salesmen walked up to him and started out by saying "Here's my card..."

"I WAS disappointed in one newspaper article that identified someone by name," he frowned. "The article was incorrect."

But named are part of the success of "Wheels," like they are part of the package of any of the newer "hot" books.

Some of the rest is the author and promotion.

So he signed books, over a hundred, copying messages on flyleaves from little scraps of paper. He even signed business cards, and a few empty sheets that weren't attached to his book.

He took his time, and chatted with the gathering of fans in the mall, encouraging one young man who said he wanted to be a writer, taking the business cards that were pressed on him.

He signed some of the books "with warm regards," and when the collector protested because it was too personal, he joked: "I feel warmly toward anyone who pays \$8 for one of my books."

Then he walked out of the mall, toward another shopping center and more cartoons and cartoons of books that were disappearing from the shelves.

Then to New York and Toronto, then back home to Nassau, a tiny island in the Caribbean, where the traffic is mainly American tourists, driving on the wrong side of the road on rented Hondas.



ARTHUR HALEY autographs "Wheels" for Pat Hauser, 32750 Eisenhower, Farmington. (Observer photo)

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OCC SEMINAR—Estate planning seminars, sponsored in conjunction with Oakland Community College, are scheduled for the Birmingham Community House and the Farmington Community Center. In Farmington, the seven-week seminars will be held from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m., beginning Tuesday, Sept. 28. In Birmingham, they will meet beginning Thursday, Sept. 30, at 8:30 p.m. Panelists include (from left) Attorney John A. Gilroy; Lewis Robbins, CPA; Mrs. Amy von Morse; Robert H. Carey; and Thomas Van Meer.

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Musical 'Swap Day' Is Today

Wonderland Center is hosting a musical instrument and sound equipment "swap day" today (Saturday) until 6 p.m.

Any and all devices for making or listening to music can be brought to the center of the mall for display. If it is musically oriented, it's acceptable, be it stereos and components, cassettes, radios, records and albums, musical instruments or used rock 'n' roll bands and singers or even singing pigs.

Those who wish to display used musically-oriented items should bring comfortable chairs and a card table on which to exhibit their wares. There is no charge for participation.

Wonderland Center is located at Plymouth and Middle Belt Roads in Livonia.

YOGA

FARMINGTON COMMUNITY CENTER
24705 FARMINGTON ROAD

10 LESSONS — \$20.00

Tuesday evenings starting Sept. 28
7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. BEGINNERS
8:30 - 10 p.m. CONTINUATION

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PARK PLACE

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MON. - THURS. 11-1 A.M. • FRI. - SAT. 11-2 A.M. CLOSED SUNDAY