

CONTACT: JIM HAMMOND

Phone: 505-264-9123

jim@jim-hammond.com

**A Biotech Thriller Set in
California Wine Country**

The Phoenix Society



By

Jim Hammond

6 SANTA ANA TRAIL N, CORRALES, NEW MEXICO 87048

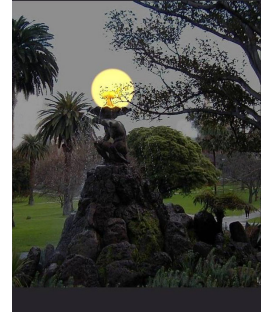
CONTACT: JIM HAMMOND

Phone: 505-264-9123

jim@jim-hammond.com

A Biotech Thriller Set in California Wine Country

The Phoenix Society



Jim Hammond boldly explores one of the dominant medical conundrums of today in "**The Phoenix Society**" (Sunstone Press). This high-stakes biotech thriller chronicles the tale of a brilliant surgeon who takes matters in his own hands to save his patients – and to condemn others to a purgatory worthy of Dante. When an equally gifted research scientist is ‘exposed’ to his scheme through a medical mishap, the doctor’s carefully disguised organ farm is destined for exposure – and ruin.

“The Phoenix Society” is Jim Hammond’s second book. The idea for the book was generated by an intriguing sign that he saw along Highway 101 while driving through California’s fabled wine region just north of San Francisco. Hammond’s fertile imagination transformed a simple advertisement for cremation services into a sinister plot to create an abundant supply of organs for transplant from unwitting donors. The interaction of several victims — not quite deceased, the bereaved family of the protagonist, the evil owners of the crematorium and their collaborators, and the frustrated police who are confronting grisly murders that they cannot comprehend makes for a blood-pounding, spine-tingling adventure for the reader.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Jason Richards is a gifted research chemist seeking a cure for Alzheimer’s disease. His first mistake is isolating himself from his wife and brother in his quest. His second, injecting himself with his experimental drug that almost kills him. Almost. When he wakes up on an operating table with an unknown substance pumping into his arm he has to ask himself if he really is alive. Welcome to the Phoenix Society, a crematorium with a difference. Their plans for Jason don’t include incinerating him, but transforming him into a mindless creature from whom they can harvest organs.

6 SANTA ANA TRAIL N, CORRALES, NEW MEXICO 87048



CONTACT: JIM HAMMOND

Phone: 505-264-9123

jim@jim-hammond.com

The Society's head, Dr. Curt Wagner, is a gifted but unscrupulous doctor who may have a cure for organ rejection, the bane of all organ transplant operations, but is the cost too high? The Society is unaware that their drug cocktail, mixed with Jason's own experimental drug results in an entirely new kind of human being; one that will prove hard to kill. To make matters worse, one of the doctor's transplant patients goes berserk and kills several people. The doctor soon finds Lieutenant Brinkley, a tenacious detective from San Francisco, on his trail, even as Jason escapes the crematorium.

Jason must come to grips with what he has become, and elude the Society's security forces, as well as a phantom presence that shadows his every move. As the bodies stack up, Jason becomes a suspect and must elude the police. The odds become higher when Dr. Wagner kidnaps his wife. Jason must return to the crematorium to confront the evil doctor, save his wife, and restore his sanity.

Hammond is available for readings, book signings, and interviews by emailing jim@jimhammond.com or calling 505-264-0123

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jim Hammond was born in Patterson, New Jersey, and grew up along the Eastern Seaboard. After a stint as a radar tech in the Navy in the South China Sea, Hammond has pursued a career in the electronics industry where he has been a designer, field support specialist, and technical instructor for more than 30 years. His work and interests have taken him around the world, and his writing interests are eclectic, drawing from experiences in Ireland and Israel, as well as in California, where he lived for many years. Hammond and his wife live in New Mexico with their three cats.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Title: The Phoenix Society

Author: Jim Hammond

Publisher: Sunstone Press

Publication date: 2004

ISBN 0-86534-397-7

Hardcover, 232 pp.

Cost: \$26.95

CONTACT: JIM HAMMOND

Phone: 505-264-9123

jim@jim-hammond.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JIM HAMMOND has been writing one way or another for years. In his career as a technical instructor and course developer in Silicon Valley, he has written numerous courses on computer networks and the Internet. His love affair with fictional writing goes back to his youth. His combined hobbies of writing novels and watching – and critiquing – movies has created a unique and compelling writing style.



His first serious short story, which is now the outline for his screenplay, “The Crystal City” derived from his fascination with science fiction and authors such as Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein. A writing class assignment in the early ‘90s developed the character who became the protagonist for his first novel, “The Burren Weeps,” a mystery set in Ireland. “The Phoenix Society,” set in Sonoma County, California, is his second novel.

Hammond draws his ideas for his books from his experiences and from his imaginative way of taking an every-day situation and turning it into a story – complete with back histories of the main characters and a fascinating journey to resolution. He considers himself a fusion writer, drawing from multiple disciplines to tell the story he wants.

Hammond is a world traveler, having taught and explored on four continents. Whenever possible, he takes his bicycle along. An avid bicyclist, Hammond further developed “The Burren Weeps” during two extended bicycle tours of Ireland. A harrowing bicycle trip down a corkscrew road develops the plot in “The Phoenix Society” and grew out of a similar ride he took near Lake Sonoma while writing the story. The motif of a high-stakes bicycle ride can be expected in all of his works.

Hammond’s interest in movies has also added to his writing technique. While taking a screenwriting course a few years ago, he decided to use the story line from “The Phoenix Society” for an exercise. He discovered that the richness and discipline of writing for the screen helped him create more fully-rounded and believable characters in his novels. The technique he has evolved is one that he is using in a writing course that he teaches aspiring novelists.

While touring in Israel, Hammond climbed into some of the caves at Qumran, at the

6 SANTA ANA TRAIL N, CORRALES, NEW MEXICO 87048



CONTACT: JIM HAMMOND

Phone: 505-264-9123

jim@jim-hammond.com

northern end of the Dead Sea. From the lip of a forbidding cave he saw the world from the same vantage point as the originators of the biblical-era documents found centuries after their concealment. Out of that experience, Hammond is currently developing his third novel, set in the Middle East and dealing with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

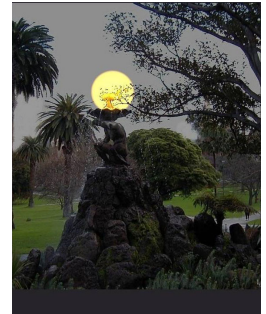
He resides in Corrales, New Mexico with his wife Barbara, who is also an author.

6 SANTA ANA TRAIL N, CORRALES, NEW MEXICO 87048

CONTACT: JIM HAMMOND

Phone: 505-264-9123

jim@jim-hammond.com



AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR OF

The Phoenix Society

What sets you apart from other writers?

My writing reflects a fusion of many passionate interests. I have traveled worldwide. I love bicycling. I am fascinated with mystical elements and places, technology, science, and history – ancient and otherwise.

But probably more importantly, I'm fascinated with the human condition. I may write with the fast pace of a thriller for one novel, as I did in "The Phoenix Society," but I turned to mystery in "The Burren Weeps," which is set in Ireland. Still, what comes through most prominently in my writing is the universal -- concepts that apply to all of us. Whether the setting is a space station, the dusty plains of Israel, a twisting road in Sonoma, we all have common concerns. For example, in *The Phoenix Society*, the protagonist, Jason, like most of us, is caught up in his career and his self-absorption leads to his initial dilemma, which leads to his horrific – and premature – encounter with *The Phoenix Society*.

You mentioned that movies have had an impact on how you write.

Yes, I'm a bit a movie addict. I usually watch about ten movies a week, analyzing the tone, setting, story line, how the visual elements add or detract from the movie, and other aspects that make one movie compelling and another a yawner. Movies have taught me a lot about compelling plot lines, and I often write a screenplay about the story before actually setting it down as a novel because the characters, and how they relate, is critical to a good story. The discipline of screenwriting, which is mostly dialog, gives added reality to my characters. Story structure also shows up cleanly in a screenplay.

6 SANTA ANA TRAIL N, CORRALES, NEW MEXICO 87048

Who are your heroes, and how have they influenced your writing?

Ira Levin and Dean Koontz have had the greatest impact on me. What fascinates me about Ira Levin is his ability to take an idea that has seized his imagination and plot the right genre to tell the story. He is equally compelling in horror (“Rosemary’s Baby”) and comedy (“No Time for Sergeants”).

Dean Koontz is often billed as the master of the suspense novel, also crosses genres. His particular sense of life allows him to mix positive human values with quirky original characters and then wrap those characters in an amazing variety of plots – from realistic to fantastic. His comedic sense nicely contrasts with his ability to create exquisite suspense – relieving stress at critical points in his narrative.

I have drawn from their examples in all my works, but particularly in “The Phoenix Society,” where, like Koontz, I am placing believable characters into a fantastic situation, and like Levin in “Rosemary’s Baby,” I keep a nightmarish quality about it long into the story, where the main characters are doubting their senses and the clues they see around them.


What is at the core of “The Phoenix Society,” then? It sounds like it’s not just any thriller.

No writer would say ‘this is just another thriller,’ but many books are too predictable. Mine is character-driven, the plot unfolding based on the lead characters’ desires and motives. I began with an initial predicament created by several characters conflicting motives and then let the characters create the story, trying to ensure that each one stayed consistent to his or her world view. I believe that my characters managed to create quite an amazing story, with twists and turns as they reacted to events.

One source of inspiration for your novels is that you have bicycled in exotic locales throughout the world. What is so invigorating about this for you? How does bicycling help you set the stage for a novel?

Bicycling for me is meditation. It fires my mind to explore all manner of character and plot pathways to a climax. My readers can expect to see a bicycle ride as an important plot element in every one of my books.

One of the things I, as an author, find so compelling about bike riding is the accessibility to people. Bicycling through a town or countryside allows me to interact



with an incredible range of character types. My bicycle touring in Ireland helped enrich my first novel, “The Burren Weeps.” Having two Irish grandmothers helped a lot as well – I have always had a passion for Ireland and things Irish. My locales were accurately drawn because I rode every mile I described in that novel.

In “The Phoenix Society,” I visualized one hair-raising downhill ride with a cyclist pursued by a demon-like being using the same road I rode one fall day.


Many of your novels have strong female protagonists (“The Burren Weeps,” “Murder Among the Scrolls”). Even when you use a male protagonist, as in “The Phoenix Society,” you pair him with a strong female character. Why is that a common theme for you?

The character of Beth O’Hara in “The Burren Weeps” began as a writing assignment. The moment I breathed life into her, she began evolving into a multi-faceted heroic woman. That set the stage for everything that occurred in the novel.

Women in jeopardy have always been a popular plot element. For me, part of the reason why this is appealing is the often greater challenge a woman must face to overcome adversity. Is she really being stalked? Can she be trusted to take on a ‘man’s’ job? How can she overcome great physical danger? Women can also more easily express their vulnerability, making for a more engaging character. Strong women as characters in a novel expand and enrich the plot options a writer can take. And, of course, I have my own wife as a living, breathing role model demonstrating the complexity and strength of a fully actualized woman!

Your novel represents many strengths as a writer, including crisp dialogue and believable settings. But your characters are what really stand out.

As I mentioned previously, my writing is character-driven. I think most successful novels are. A tricky plot may be remembered in certain situations, but over the course of fiction, it is the finely-drawn characters that will be remembered the most. When I create a new character, I often don’t know where he or she will take me at first. As I get to know the character better, I create a history – one that starts long before the action in the novel. I also act out what the character is doing and try to add at least one personal quirk that stamps the character as unique.



What is it about “The Phoenix Society” that you found fascinating to write and revise and revise almost 250 pages?

I wanted to see how to get Jason out of his predicament, the first one of his own making, the other a result of the changes in him. I also enjoy the villains. We all have a dark side, and writing about villains is one way to deal with it in a safe, intelligent manner. In fact, I like exploring the dark side so much; I have three in “The Phoenix Society” – three irredeemable villains. About the main antagonist, Curt Wagner, I wanted to know, “Why would a doctor do what he did?” He has developed a drug that could be life-enhancing, but it turns out to be quite deadly and uncontrollable. It’s a little bit of a Frankenstein concept, but drawn from what is happening in society today. The barriers Wagner was up against, such as the well-known difficulties of getting FDA approval for drugs that can have an impact on quality of life – or life and death – are real ones that often lead to tragic results when frustrated intelligence turns its focus elsewhere.

Why do you write?

I’m driven. I can’t *not* write. When I write, I am not aware of the passing of time. Sometimes I’m interrupted by my stomach growling, and I realize I haven’t eaten in eight hours. I have a hyperactive imagination, so I am always doing “what if” scenarios. If it’s a movie, I’m editing it. If it’s a book, I’m editing it. It’s not something I turn off and on.

Writing is also great fun. I love creating characters, putting them on an adventure, going with them. I love being surprised by the quirks and turns in their personalities as time unfolds. I’m never bored when I’m writing.

