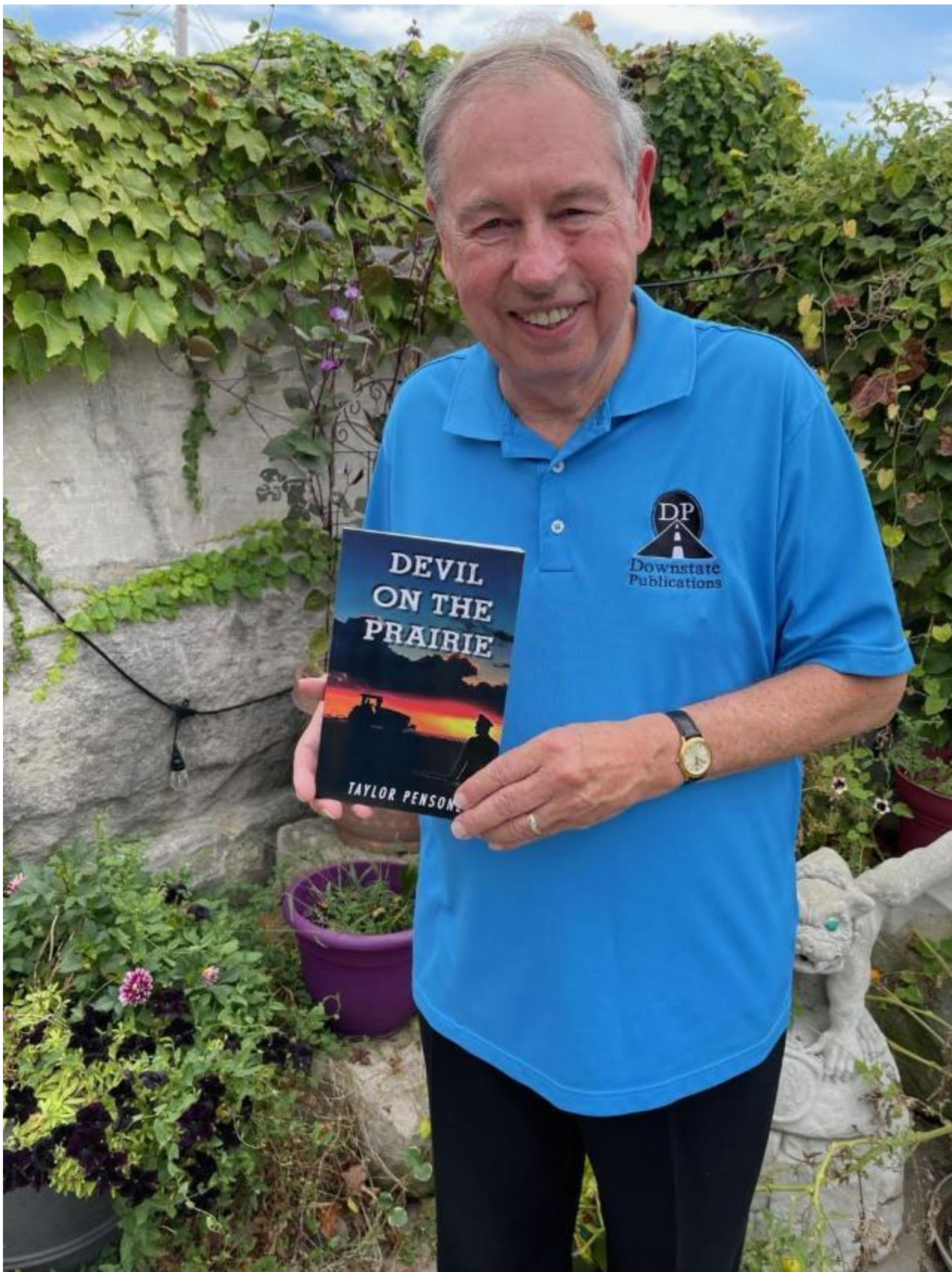




Veteran Reporter Takes On Illinois Corruption In New Mystery Novel

by Tom Emery
November 6 2023 1:20 PM



SPRINGFIELD - During his days as an Illinois Statehouse reporter, Taylor Pensoneau covered some of the state's most sordid political scandals. Now, he is doing the same as a writer of fiction.

Pensoneau has just released *Corruption Incorporated* (Downstate Publications: \$18.95), an intricately-written mystery novel with a fast-moving pace and page-turning suspense. The detailed narrative is based on the wildly corrupt political atmosphere in Illinois in the late 1960s.

“Almost all the scandals and incidents portrayed in the book did occur in real life,” remarked Pensoneau. “Virtually everything in the book really happened.”

Pensoneau, who lives in New Berlin, Ill., was a top political writer for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* from 1965-78. He was based at the Illinois Statehouse for much of that time with the *Post-Dispatch*, but also covered some of the seminal moments in national political history, including the Watergate hearings. His prowess as an investigative reporter earned him a Pulitzer Prize nomination in 1972.

He later produced a string of acclaimed political biographies, including of Illinois governors Richard Ogilvie and Dan Walker. In addition, Pensoneau has created works on southern Illinois gangsters which have proven wildly popular with readers.

Pensoneau is also a skilled writer of fiction, a departure from his days at the *Post-Dispatch* and as a historical researcher, where accuracy is at a premium.

“It’s so much easier and probably, more fun, to write fiction,” remarked Pensoneau, now 83. “I think at my age, I just don’t have the energy for pursuing the research, and the wide-ranging interviews, necessary for books like my earlier biographies of the governors and the downstate criminals.”

Corruption Incorporated is the fourth installment in a series that follows Jake Brosky, a brusque investigative reporter for the fictional *St. Louis World*. The book follows *The Summer of ’50*, *Falling Star*, and *Devil on the Prairie*, all of which were well-received by readers. Early reviews, however, show that Pensoneau’s readers think *Corruption Incorporated* is his best work of all.

In the newest book, Brosky tracks down a series of major stories, including a crooked Illinois governor, a string of scandals at racetracks and an amusement park, a succession of resignations of tarnished officials, and an increasing presence of the underworld in Illinois. The plots take the reader across many locales of southern Illinois and Missouri, as well as Europe and the Caribbean.

Though he introduces numerous characters in a wide array of scenarios, Pensoneau manages to tie up all loose ends and provide a clear outcome.

Writing with remarkable skill, Pensoneau never fails to keep the reader entertained by dropping bombshells throughout the book, adding numerous unexpected turns.

The book features a clean, easy-to-read layout and is clothed in a strikingly beautiful cover, a nighttime shot of the Illinois State Capitol building. The cover was designed by Polly Danforth of Morning Star Design in Springfield.

Pensoneau based much of *Corruption Incorporated* on his experiences from reporting at that Statehouse.

“I was inspired to write this book from my own investigations into Illinois government in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Illinois Statehouse writer for the *Post-Dispatch*,” said Pensoneau. “I visited basically all of the places in Illinois and Missouri that are in the book. But the names of the wrongdoers in the book are all fictitious, of course.”

Pensoneau, though, isn’t revealing any real identities. “No way,” he laughed. “I’m taking a lot of secrets to my grave.”

However, he adds that it is possible to identify the real-life people from the characters and plots in the book. “Back when these things occurred, there was a lot of publicity,” said Pensoneau. “So, in the 1960s and 1970s, readers of newspapers were aware of all the scandals and episodes written in the book.

“Anyone who read newspapers voraciously at the time could also look at this book, and figure things out,” continued Pensoneau. “After all these years, I decided to resurrect these characters and stories. And I had a great time in doing it.”

The real identity of some characters is more obvious than others. One secondary character in *Corruption Incorporated* is Alan Hastings, a government watchdog who is patterned after the late Ed Pound, a close friend of Pensoneau and fellow political writer from their days in the Illinois Statehouse.

Pound later became one of the nation’s most respected investigative journalists at the *U. S. News and World Report*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other top publications.

The central character, Brosky, is a fascinatingly complex individual with passion and drive for everything he does. Like everything else in the book, Brosky was inspired by Pensoneau’s life experience.

“Jake Brosky represented the kind of hard-nosed reporter that I was educated to worship,” reflected Pensoneau. “I got to see Jake Brosky in action in real life because,

more than anybody else, he's modeled after Theodore 'Ted' Link of the *Post-Dispatch*, who was still going strong when I was a young kid on the staff. Link was just a fantastic investigative reporter, tough as nails."

Now, Pensoneau is continuing his love of a new form of writing. "Fiction is really fun for me," he said. "I can virtually do it just sitting in my office at home. I've enjoyed almost everything about it."

Pensoneau says he is not planning a fifth installment of the Brosky series – even though the end of *Corruption Incorporated* left the possibility for another sequel.

"At this point, I don't know that I'll do another book," mused Pensoneau. "But I left the door open for it. So, you never know."

Corruption Incorporated is available by emailing downstatepublications@mchsi.com or by calling 217-488-7709.