

One Foot in the Black, a Novel About Wildland Firefighters by Kurt Kamm

Malibu, California –Malibu resident Kurt Kamm has used his experience in several devastating local wildfires and access to CalFire and Los Angeles County firefighters to write a compelling novel about the life of a wildland firefighter.

Mr. Kamm spent two years attending training academies in the wildland firefighter camps and female inmate fire camps of Los Angeles County Fire Department. He visited the CalFire Academy and interviewed firefighters, helicopter pilots, paramedics and traumatic stress counselors.

Mr. Kamm has become an expert on wildland fire in California. He has written a series of articles on the technical aspects on aerial firefighting, use of fire shelters, arson investigation, and various aspects of wildland firefighting. These articles are available on his website (<http://www.kurtkamm.com>) and on American Chronicle (<http://www.americanchronicle.com/>).

One Foot in the Black has been a hit with fire crews and has received favorable comment in three fire publications, CalFire's *Connections*, L.A. County Fire Department's *Size Up* and *The California Fire Service Journal*, the magazine of the California State Firefighter's Association. It is sold on the website of the Wildland Firefighter Foundation. Mr. Kamm has been interviewed by the California State Fire Marshall's Office and Chief P. Michael Freeman of the L.A. County Fire Department sent *One Foot in the Black* to each of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors.

One Foot in the Black is a phrase used to describe a position on the fireline, which is next to an area already burned ("the black"). It is both the most dangerous place - close to the flames, and the safest place - a zone into which escape is possible. The title is a metaphor for the life of Greg Kowalski, a nineteen year old forced from his home by an abusive father, who searches for safety and comfort within the family of his fire crew. The climax of this coming-of-age story occurs when Greg and his crew are trapped in an explosive wildfire in which his captain and mentor is killed.

Kirkus Discoveries comments, "Kamm, whose considerable research lends the novel a keen sense of verisimilitude, structures the narrative by unfolding two storylines at once: one

tracking Greg's budding career and the other exploring the gloomy events of his childhood. Greg's efforts to shake loose of his past make for a compelling, fast-paced read...A turbulent, thoughtful story of putting out fires, both personal and professional."

Kurt Kamm has lived in Malibu for several years with his wife and three dogs. He was previously a businessman and semi-professional bicycle racer. He is a graduate of Brown University and Columbia Law School.

One of the recent fires in Malibu, the 60 mile-per-hour Santa Ana wind-driven Canyon Fire, burned to his front door and destroyed the homes of several neighbors. Mr. Kamm said the lessons he learned from L.A. County Fire Department helped him save his home.

Mr. Kamm is currently writing *Red Flag Warning*, a novel about a serial arsonist.