

Driven to Madness

I first became interested in telling stories when I was four years old. Before I could write more than my name, I was dictating stories into my trusty tape recorder. At five, my dad helped me write a narrative about Andrews University's dairy farm. From then on, my love for writing and my experiences with Andrews University have been connected.

I continued writing short stories and poems through elementary school and even got a little of my writing published while I attended Andrews Academy. I wrote about my experiences with an empathy belly (a contraption that simulates pregnancy) for the *Adventist Review*, and during my senior year, *Insight* magazine published two of my stories.

It was at Andrews Academy that the seeds were sown for my first published novel. Bradley Sheppard, a former Academy history teacher (he now teaches at Andrews University), assigned my class a creative project centering on a key event in American history. I chose the Salem Witch Trials and wrote a thirty-five-page novella describing the events from the perspective of Mercy Lewis, one of the 'afflicted' girls who condemned over 150 people to imprisonment and two dozen to death. The story, entitled *The Madness: A Story of the Salem Witch Trials* went on to win grand prize at the Berrien County Arts & Science Expo.

Mr. Sheppard and another academy teacher, Mr. Baker, told me I should lengthen the novella and try to get it published. However, I was about to graduate and had decided to attend Andrews University and major in English with a writing emphasis. I put aside aspirations

of immediate fame and fortune to concentrate on school. I wanted to be a professional author, but I knew the importance of a good education.

At Andrews, I took writing and literature classes that only deepened my love for the written word. I often wanted to



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settle in front of my laptop and dash off page after page of inspired (or sometimes not-so-inspired) writing—only I usually never could. I had tests or projects or a dozen chapters of *The Odyssey* to read. There were worships and assemblies to attend, intramural sports to play and watch, afternoons working at the Writing Center, and evenings studying and chatting at the Gazebo. All these things were

part of the college experience, but I missed writing. Not the producing of reports and 10-page essays analyzing Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, but the joy of creating something new and beautiful, something brimming with meaning, something rich and unique and permanent. To craft a sentence that sings, or to fashion a story that can speak to the heart of a reader thousands of miles away, or to build characters with dreams and quirks and real emotions out of a blank white page—that is what I love.

Because of this persisting desire to create, the summer of my junior year I dedicated myself to rewriting *The Madness* and trying to get it published. I wanted *The Madness* to be a tool that 5th through 8th grade teachers could use in their American History classes to expose their students to the incredible events of history that may only receive a paragraph or two in traditional textbooks. It was fascinating to research the time period, trial transcripts, and numerous books that have been published on the subject.

After I had revised and lengthened

numerous drafts, I sent it off to several children's publishers. PublishAmerica, a small firm in Maine, ended up printing it. In the meantime, for my Senior Research Thesis, I've started my next novel. I believe that God gave me a talent, and it

is my responsibility to use it for Him.

Whether or not I ever get that fame or fortune, or even if I never publish another book, I will continue to write, and I have faith that God will use me somehow for his own Divine plan.

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**The Madness* can be purchased at the Andrews University bookstore and Schug Drug in Berrien Springs, or online at PublishAmerica.com or Amazon.com.