

Local author writes third novel in series

By APRIL FEAGLEY
Daily News Staff Writer

Retired Juniata Valley High School English teacher and local author Mike Fields recently released the third in a series of suspense novels set against a scenic central Pennsylvania landscape.

"Twin River III: A Death at One Thousand Steps" features the eponymous Huntingdon County landmark as well as other recognizable locations.

"The title of my books, 'Twin River,' is where the Little Juniata and Juniata Rivers meet. It's a beautiful, peaceful area. And the water is clean and has a great fish population," Fields said. "The setting is so important to a novel. And there is no better setting than Huntingdon County. When I selected the Thousand Steps trail for Twin

River III, I was looking at an area of historical importance and natural beauty. The book and the thousand steps present a challenging, exhilarating experience."

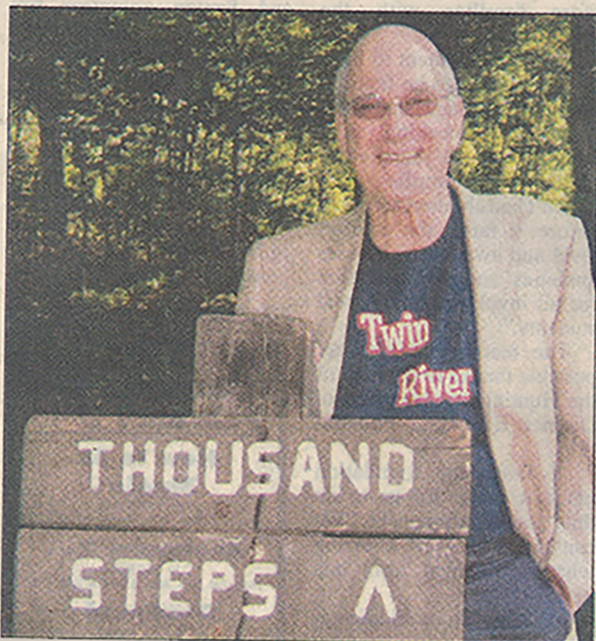
Although Fields has been a longtime area resident, he first climbed Thousand Steps three years ago.

"I stopped and climbed them and it was an eye opener. First, I just wanted to figure out if I could do it with a

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Submitted photo

Local author Mike Fields incorporated Thousand Steps into his third novel, "Twin River III: A Death at One Thousand Steps."



Author

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replacement knee and, as was doing it, it was a good experience," he said. "With the monumental job they did in making the steps and the natural scenic beauty, I said this will work for a book. It's not particularly dangerous: going up those steps, but had to put danger in the book. It was very easy because of the drop offs."

His previous books, "Twin River," which highlights the legend of Captain Jack and the historic massacre of Captain Phillips' rangers, and "Twin River II: Have Weapons Will Travel," which includes a bit about Edgewater Acres, set fictional event against real places.

"The local climate here is wonderful," he said. "I like people to see these places through reading. I think we are very fortunate here."

While the locations closely resemble the originals, Fields said his characters are pure works of fiction.

"It's all fiction — all imagination. You read so much and sometimes something lingers from another character here or there," said Fields. "And after years and years of teaching thousands of students, maybe there is something there that I remembered, too. You tend to take everything you've seen in the past and incorporate it when you're writing."

Fields began writing while teaching overseas for the Peace Corps and International Voluntary Service in Thailand and Laos from 1963-1968, during the Vietnam War.

"In 1967, I met John Steinbeck, who was writing on the Vietnam War for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*," he said. "He wrote about my experiences when the Mekong flooded the area. After talking to Steinbeck, and with his encouragement, I was determined to write a novel. Using an old Smith Corona typewriter, I finished my first book, 'Bridge Over Troubled Water.' It was about our efforts to bring education and peace to Southeast Asia. The book went nowhere."

Fields is hopeful "Twin River III" may garner similar attention as the previous two, both of which garnered national recognition.

"'Twin River' and 'Twin River II' won Indie Book finalist recognition in the military and terror categories," said Fields. "So, I'll see if 'Twin River III' can repeat it. It's rewarding to know that the books I've written have received recognition."

Although no book signings are currently scheduled, Fields is considering a unique event which will benefit the Thousand Steps.

"I'd love to have a book signing at the top of the Thousand Steps and work it out to have all of the donations go towards trail maintenance," he said.

The Twin River series can be purchased online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

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