



Q&A with Mike Dellosso

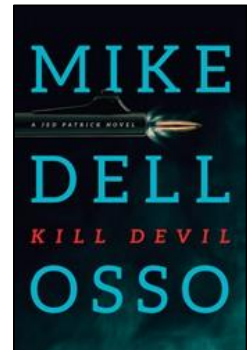
Author of *Kill Devil*



About the Author . . . Mike Dellosso is the author of several novels of suspense, an adjunct professor of creative writing and popular conference teacher, a husband, and a father. Born in Baltimore, Mike now resides in southern Pennsylvania with his wife and four daughters. Visit him at mikedellosso.com.

1. *Kill Devil* is the sequel to *Centralia*. How are the two books connected?

First and foremost they are connected by Jed Patrick and his family. *Kill Devil* picks up where *Centralia* left off. With the conclusion of *Centralia* we left Jed and Karen and Lilly headed to Idaho where they would assume new identities and a new life far from any government agency's reach or knowledge. They would become obscure and live in safety, albeit secluded. But somehow, some way, they are found and in *Kill Devil* we see the results of that. There is also a continuation of the story behind the Centralia project, a ghost agency buried deep within the labyrinth of Washington politics. Jed is still battling this foe and continues to battle the enemy within himself as well, his memories and mysterious past.



2. How did you come up with the concept for the Jed Patrick series?

It started with my obsession with the Jason Bourne series and character. I love the whole concept. I've also been interested in government conspiracy theories, cover-ups, black-ops, that whole sort of "underworld" that exists in the shadows. I'm also quite a family man. So that got me thinking about what it could look like if those two worlds collided. What if a family man discovers that he has a past he has no memory of and that the mysterious past involved conspiracy, cover-ups, black-ops and him being a super soldier? Then to top it off I wanted to put a unique spin on it and infuse elements of faith into the story. That alone set the concept apart and opened a whole new world of possibilities for the storyline.

3. You don't shy away from violence in your novels. How do you handle writing those situations as a Christian author?

I handle them carefully. I know it may not seem like it to some readers but I do put a lot of thought into how I handle violence in my books. I want the reader to feel the gravity of the situation, the intensity of the moment, but I need to draw the line on how much I describe and finding where that line should be is a challenge at times. I'm sure I've crossed the line at times for some readers but for me, I'm careful to stay on the side that gives the reader the information he or she needs without glorifying the violence or glamorizing it.

4. What role does faith play in the lives of some of the main characters—Jed, his wife Karen, daughter Lilly, Tiffany, and Jack?

Faith plays a huge role in all of their lives. In spite of everything they've been through, especially Jed with all the brainwashing and torture, their relationship with God has remained the one thing that has gone unchanged. Yes, Jed doubts it at times and had to rediscover it totally, but if there is one ribbon of hope that runs through their lives, it's faith. Lilly's faith is the strongest of the three of them, so childlike and unwavering. Jed draws strength from her and in *Kill Devil* learns that he needs to make her faith his own, he needs to stop channeling strength through her and find his own very real connection with God. Like all of us, their faith development and maturity is a journey with ups and downs and setbacks and growth spurts, but they move forward, learning more, discovering more, and being challenged more and more to simply trust.

5. Things are not always as they seem for Jed in *Kill Devil*. How is he able to discern what is true versus the lies he receives from people around him or the voices in his head?

At first he can't. For most of the story and right up until the climax Jed is tortured with thoughts that can't be his and a reality that seems too bizarre to be real. He isn't sure what's real and what's not. But when everything is on the line he finally cries out to God, he goes back to his base faith, the one thing that has never lied to him, never let him down, never used him for its own purpose. And it's there, of course, where he finds the truth. And how true is that in our own lives?

6. Like Jed, have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you needed to compromise your values for the greater good?

A few years ago I was promoted to a management position in my day job. It's what I wanted and was a goal of mine. But I quickly discovered that I couldn't be the type of manager I wanted to be. I felt I was being forced to be the kind of manager my boss wanted me to be and it was uncomfortable for me. It didn't fit. I felt like I had to be someone I wasn't to fit in and be successful. I was told it was for the good of the team, that I needed to do this and say that to help everyone grow. But still it just

didn't sit comfortably with me. Eventually, I made the difficult decision to step down and return to my old position. I wish things could have turned out differently but I just couldn't keep fighting the pressure to be someone I wasn't.

7. What do you hope readers will take away from the story?

That though life may get crazy and reality may seem muddled, though varying versions of the truth may come your way and different voices will whisper messages, there is one thing that never changes: God's truth. He is the only one truly worthy of our faith, our trust, our love. He is the one constant in life. He never changes and His will is always right.

8. You have gone through some challenging situations in your personal life—cancer, overcoming a severe stutter, cancer, and a failed adoption. What have you learned through these situations?

I've learned that we don't always understand what God is doing or why He's doing it. In fact, truly, we rarely understand it. He opens doors; He closes doors. He permits some things to happen and prevents other things from happening. He calls us to do some pretty strange and seemingly irresponsible things. But in spite of all that I've learned to trust Him. I've learned that His ways are not our ways. I've learned that a surefire way of heading off disappointment is to hold on loosely to our plans and label everything with "To be determined [if it's God's will]." They have been hard lessons but once you grasp it, once you truly understand that we belong to Him, that we are entitled to nothing and are not our own, then it all makes sense. It's all about walking by faith. One step at a time.

9. As a creative writing teacher, what advice would you give aspiring authors?

Two basic things. One, don't get too caught up in the "rules" of fiction writing. Most of them change weekly and few of them, if broken, will actually kill your manuscript. Pay attention to the basics, get really good at the basics, and then have fun. Too much of the art of fiction writing is smothered by nonsense rules. And two, never give up. Persist. Here's a truth: 100% of published authors never gave up. You'll want to. You'll second-guess your motivation, your talent, your purpose. The day will come when you have no desire to write. But write anyway. The day will come when that last rejection will utterly break your heart and you'll want to throw in the towel. Don't. Write anyway. Keep on.

10. What is next for you, writing-wise?

I have some ideas for a third Jed Patrick novel and am bouncing them around to see which one fits best. I also have an idea for a stand-alone thriller. Other than that I've written a couple short stories featuring Jed Patrick and a bunch of articles and guest posts to promote *Kill Devil*.