

STARK RAVING MAD

ALASKA | FARMING | FAMILY | WRITING | HERBALISM | LAST FRONTIER

Just Like a Soldier

In November and December, I awoke at 7 to walk a snowy path to our yurt to build a second fire. At 8, I returned to a warming yurt with hot coffee to work on Book 2. I worked until 12, when I was exhausted and ready to move my body. I told my counselor about the schedule, and he mentioned that I am doing two types of trauma therapy every day. "Would you say that trauma therapy is good for you every day?" He asked. "Of course not," I replied. So I took a break, and like every other time I take a break from writing a book, it is longer than expected.

I am back at it now, minus the building and burning a second fire in the yurt. I work with headphones and Chopin in our loft while the girls play downstairs or outside. The progress is slow, but the book is coming along. I am on the final draft before submitting it to the editor. And this time, I will not add to the story *after* receiving an edited copy or I will end up with dozens of published errors like in *Warflower*. It's a process!



Secret Garden Alaska

Winter on the farm is cold and quiet. The high tunnel is covered in a thick layer of ice while a thousand garlic plants lie dormant under straw mulch inside. Three feet of snow covers everything outside. The ducks waddle out of their homes everyday to wag their little tails, quack a bunch, and flap their wings. The chickens gather under the coop to peck at frozen dirt, eat scratch, and run. The goats only step out to stare in our direction and bleat. We are all hunkered in our cozy homes. All but the squirrels and rabbits, which are the most active neighbors out here. We rarely see a rabbit, yet their prints are stamped everywhere in the snow. The squirrels seem to be having the most fun by jumping from branch to branch foraging for pine cones.

Next year's seeds have been inventoried and a list to buy is in the works. The crop plan is almost complete. May is an eternity away, yet every time we eat a roasted chicken with potatoes and garlic, we smile in remembrance of the seasons to come.

Just Like a Soldier

When I am not working on the book, I listen to "The Creative Penn Podcast," where author, Joanna Penn, talks about her twelve year career as an independent author with a slightly Australian, slightly British accent. Her and her guests share tips about being successful authors in our modern age, and I have compiled a few tips they have in common to run a profitable author business.

1. Focus on direct sales to customers first. Connect with readers one-on-one, make more \$ each sale, and don't wait months for paychecks. To make 1 loyal supporter is worth more than an Amazon rating.
2. Use a Kickstarter campaign to launch books with financial support up front from readers. Donors receive books before being shared with the public, and other perks.
3. Authors either have a podcast, a newsletter, a Patreon site to teach classes, a blog, a Shopify store, a Substack account, or all of the above where they earn \$ and promote their work.
4. Authors support other indie authors every chance they can by reading, collaborating, hosting, reviewing, and recommending their books to the public.

Nook & Cranny



Rustic White Bread

A huge loaf of bread that goes quick in soup season.

You'll need:

- 1 Dutch Oven with lid
- 5 cups all purpose flour
- 3 tsps salt
- 2 tsps active dry yeast
- 2 tsps sugar
- 1 1/2 cups warm (not hot) water

Mix water and sugar together. Stir to dissolve.

Add yeast and stir gently, those babies are alive!

In a separate bowl, mix flour and salt together (I mix together with a whisk to get a little air in there).

Once yeast water is bubbling (this takes around 5 minutes, it may bubble only barely, but this tells you it is living and in good shape), mix liquid with dry.

Dough will be "shaggy." Cover, with a damp towel, plastic wrap, beeswax paper... and set in a warm, non-drafty area for 1 hour, dough will double in size.

Once doubled, preheat oven to 450 with dutch oven (with lid on) on middle rack.

Flour counter and turn bowl upside down, scrape dough sides out if needed. Fold "corners" on dough and place back in bowl.

After 30 min, yes let dutch oven preheat for that long to get nice and hot!, carefully pull out dutch oven and place dough in. Put lid back on, and bake for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes, remove lid and cook for another 15 minutes.

Internal temp should be 200F if you like to check temp.

Enjoy!

Just Like a Soldier

5. Authors cherish and nurture relationships with local bookstores. (Thank you Inkwel's Bookstore in Soldotna!)

6. Authors advertise and promote their work on so many platforms I can't name them all. Amazon sales account for roughly 15% of their sales.

7. Authors stress the importance of writing, writing, and more writing. A bad book will not sell, and the only way to write better books is to practice the craft. A backlist of published books is gold for an author. So write more books!

These tips are what sparked the *Stark Raving Mad* Newsletter, a soon-to-be Kickstarter campaign, and my drive to change the way I do things as an independent author. I hope they help you to publish your own stories to share!

Robert as a Podcast Guest

"The Must Read Alaska Show"
- Aired December 27th, 2023

"The Military Veteran Podcast"
- Aired in September

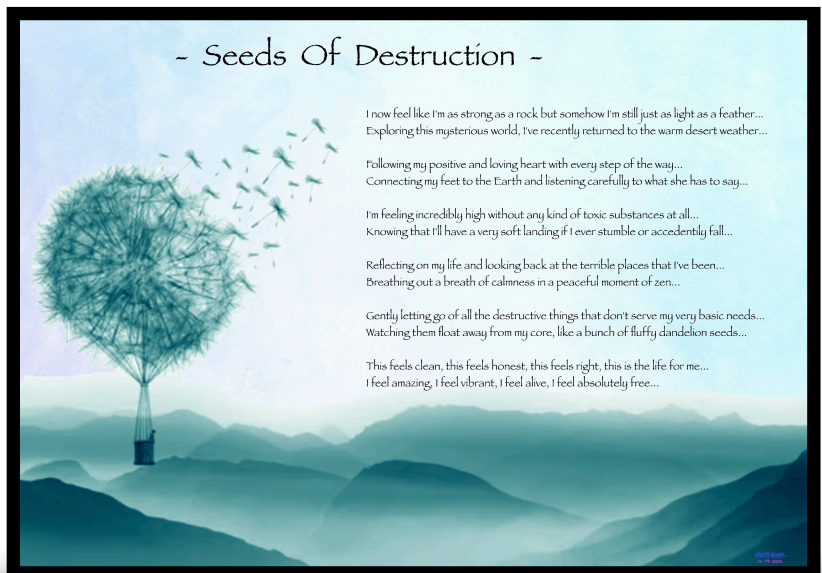
"Crude Conversations"
- Aired in January

"One Day at a Time (ODAAT)"
- Aired in February

"Busy Living Sober Podcast"
- Aired in February

Dispatch

1/4: Neighbor in distress used phone for domestic assistance. No heat. -10. Provided wood, food, lighter.	1/11: Suspect foul play with drake in coop. Homeless chickens cuddled under coop.	abandoned truck near bridge.
1/6: Missing report filed - Istanbul the cat was released at 10 pm - has not been seen since	1/12: Coyotes heard in distance. Potential homicide.	1/14: Ruined head gasket in generator, potential sabotage under investigation.
1/7: 2 eagles spotted near coop. Observing for aerial assault	1/13: Deep prints spotted around fence perimeter.	1/14: Road block 1.5 mile from home - mama and calf
1/7: Plow truck stuck in ditch due to heavy snows. Denied assistance.	1/13: Mama & calf loitering outside fence line, potential breaking & entering.	1/14: Second road block 1 mile from home - abandoned vehicle still at bridge.
1/9: Strange meowing heard from driveway gate. Runaway cat returns home.	1/13: Growing # of snails planning to overthrow solitary fish.	1/15: Coyotes heard in distance. Potential looting in progress.
	1/14: 1 set of human tracks with sled in early am. Suspect arrived to	1/16: Owl heard near home. Potential stalker nearby.
		1/19: Leave farm



Send us your poetry!

Poem by subscriber, Matt Kruger

Classifieds

Have You Seen Me?

8 lbs- Last seen wearing tortoise shell coat. Not confirmed if runaway or foul play. Goes by name Istanbul, alias- Isty.

Call Tip Hotline



Secret Garden Alaska is accepting applications for Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOFer) on wwoofer.net for the 2024 growing season. Go online and apply!

9 month old Nigerian/Alpine Cross & Her Mommy in Need of Alpine Buck. Call Binky and Bell @ 907.435.4576

Have something to post in our classifieds section? Email us the ad and we will see if it fits.

SecretGardenAlaska@gmail.com

Plant of the Month

Yarrow (*Achillea Millefolium*)

- ✦ Asteraceae (aster, daisy, or sunflower family)
- ✦ Anti-inflammatory, astringent, antiseptic, antibacterial
- ✦ Stimulant
- ✦ Personal favorite use: Bath - Achilles' mother dipped him into a vat of yarrow tea by holding him from his heel
- ✦ As a tea, it helps to break up a fever, cold or flu by causing you to "sweat it out" by warming you up
- ✦ As a tincture, it aids digestion by fighting against bloating, indigestion, and the toots
- ✦ Used in wartime to stop bleeding of soldiers
- ✦ If you have a small cut that is bleeding, chew some leaves and place the poultice over wound
- ✦ Used in a sitz bath as an after birth miracle
- ✦ Unclogs pores
- ✦ Grows white and salmon in Alaska, but also comes in yellow, red, and different hues of pink and purples. We grow a "Colorado Mix" on the farm (see picture below) that is used in our Herbal Line, "Late Bloomers," along with the white we forage.
- ✦ Do not use if pregnant

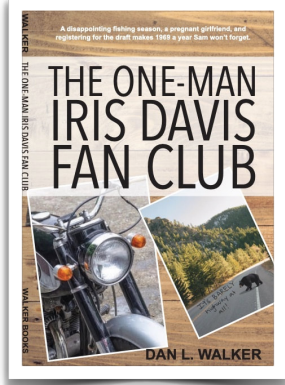
How do you use yarrow?

What is your favorite variety?

Write us and let us know and we will include your letter in next month's newsletter.



Independent Books



Alaskan author, Dan L. Walker, wrote and published a page-turner about young love, tough choices, and doing the right thing despite popular opinion.

The One-Man Iris Davis Fan Club is the third book in a series that follows teenager, Sam Barger, and his adventures growing up in Alaska in the sixties.

The other two books in the series, *Secondhand Summer* and *Back Home*, were published by Alaska Northwest Books while Dan self-published the third one using IngramSpark.

Each book is better than the last and can be read out of order. Order them directly from Dan's website@

danlwalker.com/index.html



Sobriety Rules

We traveled to Missouri this month to visit family and buy a house. The anxieties, sounds, and stresses of traveling with two toddlers can almost make a person want to order a drink. Instead, we packed a backpack full of healthy snacks (\$50 in snacks is nothing compared to a bender), practiced deep breathing, and reminded ourselves that it was only for X hours. Before we knew it, we landed in Kansas City with 3 more sober flight under our belts.

Ask Annavas

Q: Who is Annavas and what is this column all about?

A: Annavas is Savanna spelled backwards. The first job that I ever worked on the books was at a coffee shop in a sleepy downtown. I was 15, and I would often skip school to work as a barista and watch the train go by. I looked forward every day to reading the "Ask Amy" column in every newspaper I could get my hands on. I can't remember if it was "Amy" in every paper, but it was always what I sought out.

In a public setting in my "real life" I don't give much advice. I talk too slow for others to wait and listen as I stumble around in search of words. I am also very shy, conservative or submissive, whichever docile adjective you think fits best. I am also judgmental, and my advice may not always be the most sound, but I've wanted to have my own advice column since 2002 and here it is.

So send in your questions, dear readers to get a reply!

SecretGardenAlaska@gmail.com

Letters to the Editor

The staff of the *Stark Raving Mad* newsletter are dying to learn about our readers. Email us a letter, and if it fits in with what we are doing, we will publish it the following month.

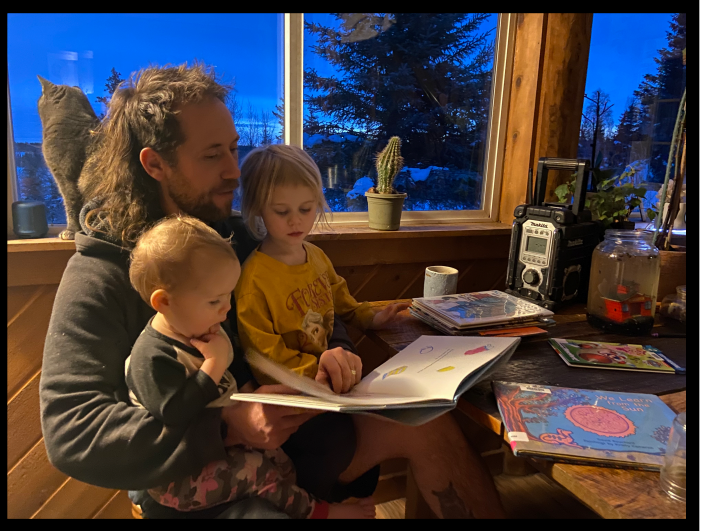
Thank you for your support!

Stark Raving Mad Crew

Photos of the Month



Watching Aurora Borealis from the living room



Anywhere from 21-25% of Americans are illiterate. Let's change that!



Enjoying a frozen custard at Freddy's in Kansas City



When you find Love, throw your fears and selfish desires aside and dive in

Send your favorite February photos to see your name and picture in next month's newsletter.