

Pearson brings 'Forever Across the Marsh' home to Camden

War veteran and rising star author Jeff Pearson is coming home to Camden to meet readers and sign books. His first published novel, *Forever Across The Marsh*, is connecting in powerful ways with readers across the nation, and is already selling out in Savannah area stores.

"The book is set in Savannah, but there is a lot of Camden and Lugoff in it," Pearson explains. "Not by name, but those from here will recognize those parts. This community -- both Camden and Lugoff -- raised me. I have clear memories of both my first day of kindergarten at Pine Tree Hill and my last day at Lugoff-Elgin High School (L-EHS). I met a lot of wonderful people in between those two days."

Pearson's parents, Mel and DeLaine Pearson, have lived in Camden for more than 35 years. DeLaine taught high school at Lugoff-Elgin and Mel is Camden's city manager.

Since graduating from L-EHS, Pearson earned an engineering degree from Clemson University and a law degree from George Washington University. He then joined the U.S. Navy as a member of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) corps. While on active duty, Pearson served with the U.S. Marine Corps in Fallujah, Ramadi, and other remote places in Iraq. He also served in Kabul and Kandahar, Afghanistan. Pearson is currently a commander in the U.S. Navy, serving as a reserve officer.

"I'm not surprised. That sounds like Jeff," one of Jeff's high school friends said when he learned Pearson wrote a book.

As a young man, Pearson left his mark on South Carolina, too -- as a state champion wrestler, football player, baseball player, and valedictorian.

"Those last facts are a little embarrassing. That was so long ago, and I do not think that my life is spectacular in any way," Pearson said. "That is why I wrote a book of fiction. I began writing about 11 years ago, during my deployment to Iraq with the Marine Corps. Those experiences shaped my writing, but not in a way that you might expect. In the chaos overseas, I began writing humor with a mix of adventure. The humor helped me and some others get through the

madness."

For the next 10 years, some of Pearson's readers urged him to write again.

"I have those supporters to blame and thank for this book," Pearson said. "Meeting readers and learning about how the book has impacted them has been the most rewarding part of the experience."

Pearson's novel, *Forever Across The Marsh*, opens with the main character, Melvin Scott, believing he has found a formula for becoming a millionaire in less than 30 days. There is a problem. Scott lives in total chaos with his wife and young children in a house that is falling apart. This is on top of leaving the military to start over. What follows is a roller coaster ride of misadventures -- both serious and hilarious. Scott's search for riches comes to a head when he meets a professional treasure hunter from Key West who has located one of Blackbeard's sunken ships in the marsh outside of Savannah, Ga. Racing to join the treasure hunter, Scott stops in his tracks when he encounters the one person in the world who could keep him from finding the treasure.

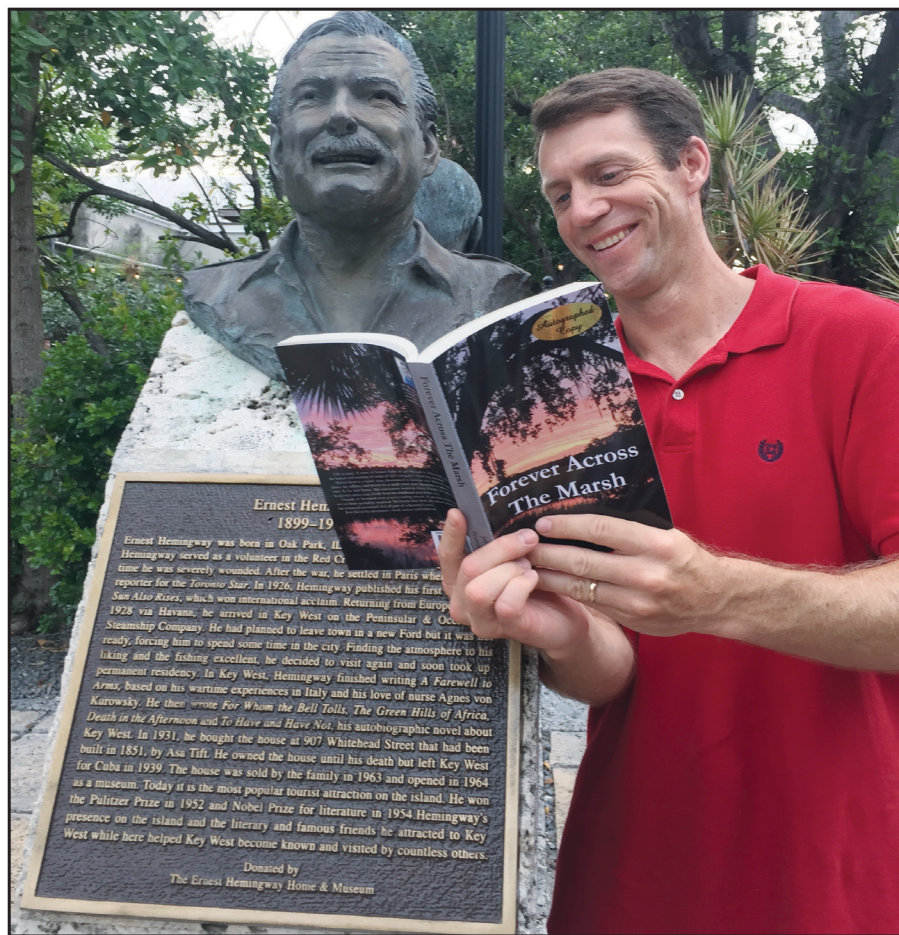
"The book follows the day-to-day struggles of a family trying to start over again," Pearson said. "Never very far away is the supernatural magic of the Lowcountry marsh. Add the allure of riches and some colorful characters that are fighting their own battles and you get about thirty short stories tied together to form a single novel."

Pearson lives in the Savannah area with his wife, Megan, and their three young children.

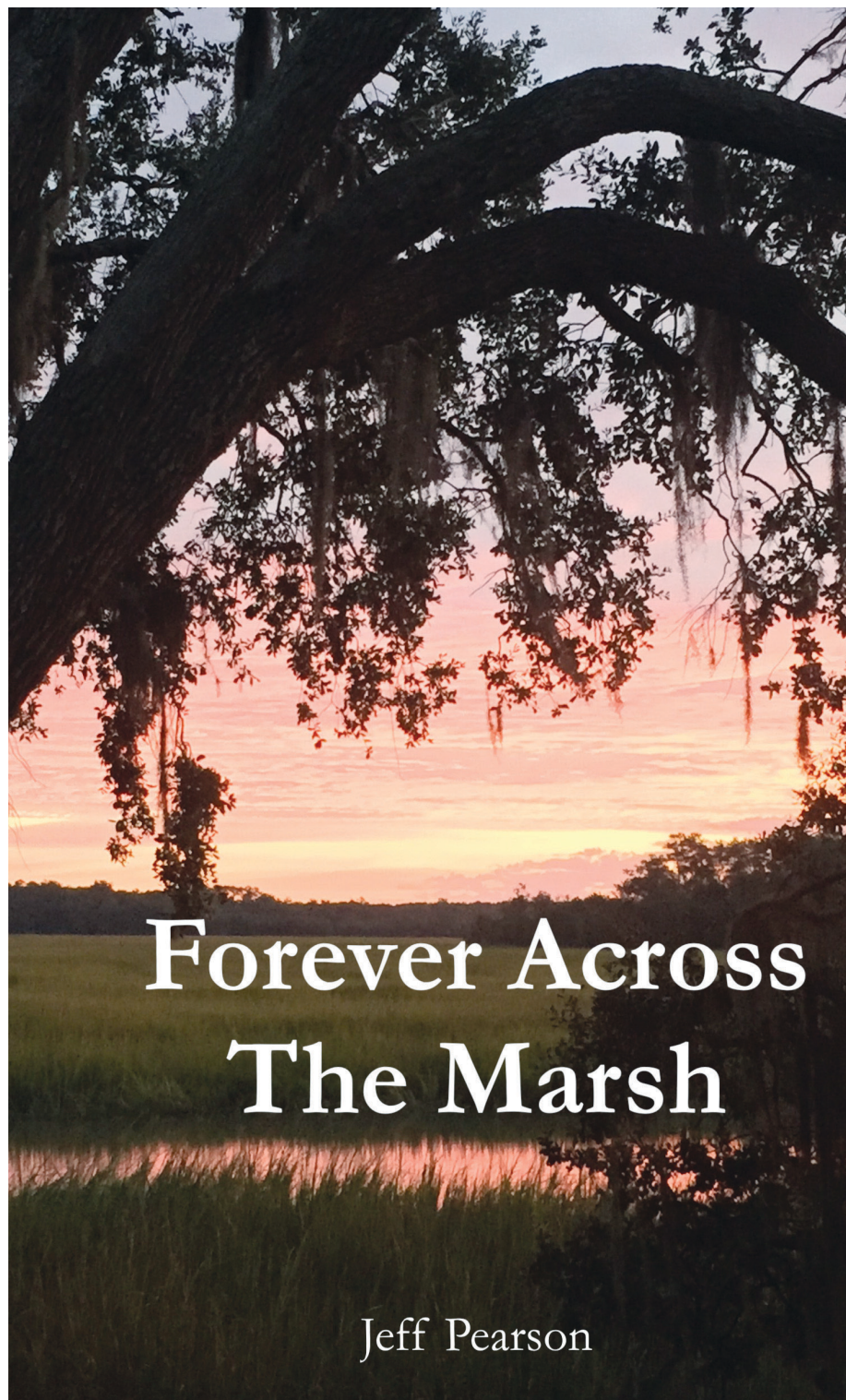
"I owe everything to them. All of them," Pearson said. "Without the day-to-day chaos in my own life, there is no way I could have created this book. I think that total chaos is common for most families, especially when our children are younger. Even more so than my time in Iraq and Afghanistan, my family has taught me how precious and short life can be. Readers who connect with this book feel the same way."

Pearson will be at Books on Broad, 944 Broad St. in Camden this Saturday, Dec. 21 from 1 to 3 p.m.

You can learn more about the book at www.acrossthemarsh.com.



Kershaw County native Jeff Pearson looks over his newly published novel, *Forever Across the Marsh*, in front of a bust of famed author Ernest Hemingway in Key West, Fla., which Hemingway called home. One of the novel's characters is based on a true encounter Pearson had with a professional treasure hunter from Key West. "Hemingway was an influence in my writing style," Pearson said in an email, "but not as much as Mark Twain. I looked to both of those writers for inspiration. Most of the action takes place in Savannah, Ga., where Pearson lives with his wife and three children. He will be at Books on Broad on Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m. to sign copies of *Forever Across the Marsh*."



Arts Center hosts Dance Place fundraiser, Baxter exhibition

The Arts Center of Kershaw County will present two special fundraiser performances of *The Nutcracker* by The Dance Place this Saturday, Dec. 21 in the Wood Auditorium. The performances are at 3 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students/children and are on sale now by calling the Arts Center at (803) 425-7676, through the box office located at 810 Lyttleton St. in Cam-

den, or online at www.fineartscenter.org. This holiday classic benefits programming at the Arts Center.

The Dance Place's *Nutcracker* is the full-length ballet, performed by dancers ages 4 through adult from all over the Kershaw County area. The story of Clara will come to life with music, costumes, scenery and special effects.

Also, the Arts Center



will feature Todd Baxter in the Bassett Gallery from Jan. 9, 2020, through

Jan. 31, 2020. The opening reception for the exhibit will be held in the gallery from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 9, 2020. The Bassett Gallery is sponsored by Kornegay Funeral Home.

Baxter has loved to draw the world around him as far back as he can remember, one of those enviable people who always knew what they wanted to be when they grew up. His artist's eye first guided Todd's successful career

as a graphic designer, begun after he graduated from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh in 1975. For more than three decades, he created images that engaged audiences in the world of advertising. Then in June 2010, with the responsibilities of raising a family in the rearview mirror, he decided to adjust course to focus on his passion for fine art.

"I am extremely grate-

ful to be able to pursue my passion, to have the opportunity to do what I love doing, every day," Baster said.

He is currently represented by the Providence Gallery in Charlotte, N.C., and Olive's in Fort Mill. Baxter is a member of the Tega Cay Art League, the Charlotte Art League, the Catawba River Art Guild and the Charlotte Plein Air Painters.