

# LOCAL Arts & Entertainment

## Robert Hill - his fiction could be truth

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

The sun is a busy place and it helped Robert Hill write a book, *Alone Together*.

"I wrote it for mid-teens, perfect for middle school," he said, "but everyone will enjoy it."

It tells the story, in the first person, from the point of view of a 13-year-old boy. As the older of his two sons is that age, Mr. Hill had a handy point of reference.

"Last year, I got a little frustrated with my kids being on all their technology, thinking of my dad kicking us out during the sunny days -we'd be gone all day..."

Inspired by the fierce tenacity both his sons have for their electronic devices, resisting all their father's comments about putting them down and doing something else, Mr Hill decided to write a book about a day when all the world's technology crashes. Everything grinds to a halt. Everywhere.

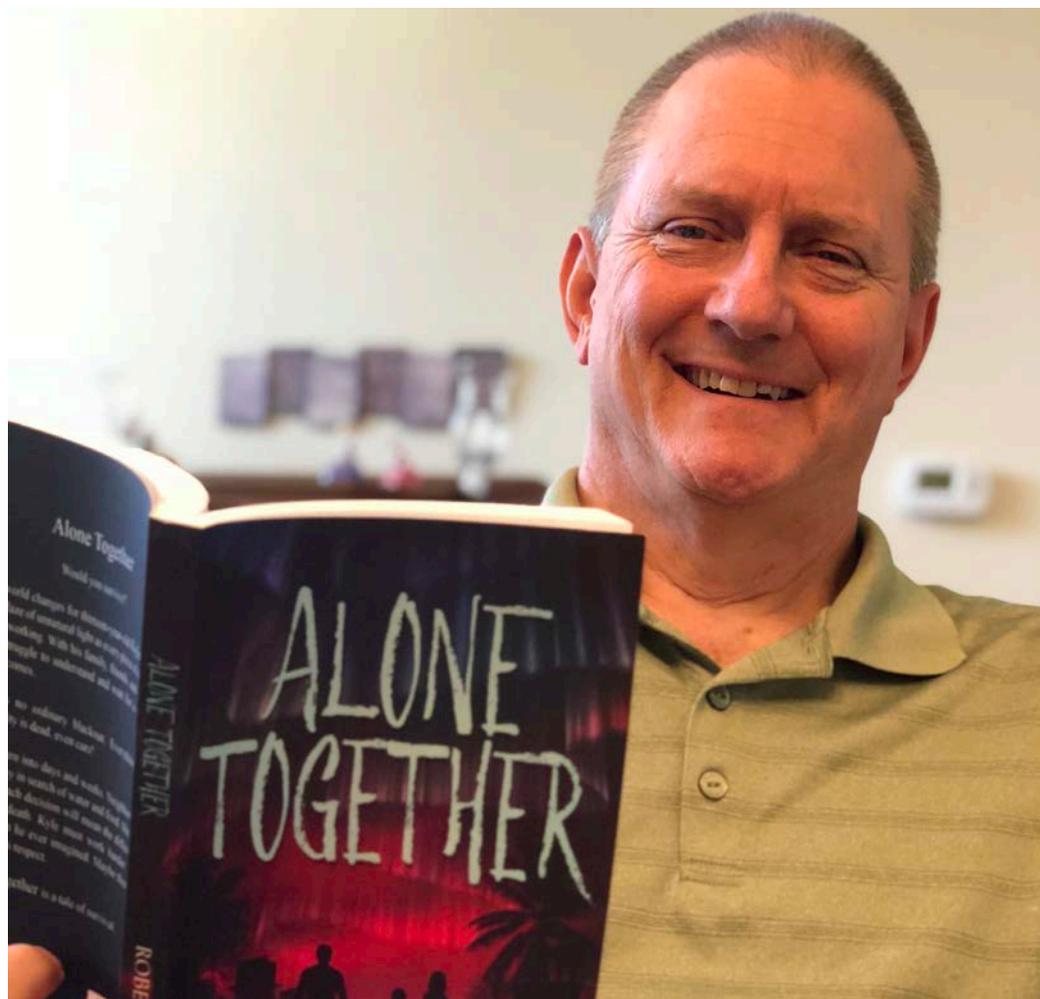
The question is, what would happen if technology was completely stopped, world wide?

He wanted to find a way this could actually occur but without the wholesale death and destruction of everything else and he did: coronal mass ejections (CME). A CME is created as a significant release of plasma and magnetic field from the solar corona usually following solar flares.

In other words, it is a massive ejection of material and electromagnetic radiation from the sun. To a greater or lesser extent, CME's happen all the time and they can influence the earth by way of interfering with the polar auroras, making them visible far beyond their normal range and wide spread, long term power outages.

In 1859, at time when the telegraph was brand new, a (presumed) CME, (they had not been identified as such yet) hit the world and knocked out all the telegraph poles and wires, causing fires in places and jolts to the people using them. The Northern Lights were so powerful that they were seen in Hawaii.

Mr Hill assured the Citizen, "If a CME that powerful hit the earth today, it would wipe out all our technology. Including cars," he said. "Cars are so full of technology these



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**NEW AUTHOR:** Orangeville native Robert Hill, now residing in California, recently released his first novel, *Alone Together*.

days."

He liked the premise of the CME's for its relevant disregard of buildings and beings which would not be harmed by its power, except as a result of association at the moment of impact.

As he described his liking of it "that a natural occurrence can wipe out all technology."

For the last 25 years, Mr. Hill and his wife have lived in California but he is visiting his home town of Orangeville, where there was a chance for us to have a chat. As it happened, the move to California came when the couple went "to attend a wedding and, while I was there, somebody offered me a job."

He went down for three months to see if it

would work "before my wife gave up her job - she is a MBA as well. The job did work. So, we packed everything up and moved there."

It was and was not as simple as it sounds, for when he was younger, still in Wilfred Laurier University doing a degree in Business Administration, Mr.Hill suffered a broken neck in a swimming accident and, as a result, is a paraplegic. "I have always tended to be pretty even keeled: some things you can change; some you can't. Some of the people in the rehabilitation were angry and pretty grumpy but they weren't fun to be around. I was just anxious to get out.

"All those 'stages' psychologists say people have to go through - I skipped them and went straight to acceptance and just kept

going. I went on to get my MBA. I got myself together just living my life - like everybody else."

In fact, Mr.Hill's education and working life are all about business and numbers. So, now that he has fulfilled, at least to start with, another side of his talent: to write, "I've always toyed with ideas of putting a long story together...Once the ideas come, I tend to charge right ahead and put the words on paper before I forget. It's a very interesting craft...my world is numbers and business. It's good to have different hobbies." He and his wife "used to travel quite a bit and I did wheelchair marathons but when we had children, my hobby became my kids and I put my racing wheelchair away.

"Now, they're at that age when they would really rather be with their friends."

The psychology of the situation in the book, *Together Alone*, was interesting to work out. Said Mr. Hill, "I did the research and it made a natural fit for my idea - cars, nothing would work. I did research on the science. So, the cause and effect fold this into the family and friends. The scene is my own town in California, Tustin. I even kept the street names, toyed around with the setting a bit. I thought - 'let's make this where we live.'

"This hobby is very rewarding. I really like it: nothing more inviting than an empty page and a virtual pen. Interaction between the people and the situation is fascinating. It's possible there will be a sequel to this."

During the writing, Mr. Hill worked with a developmental editor and later with a proof reader and copy editor. "They helped with some suggestions. I did engage a cover artist. I had an idea of exactly what I wanted the cover to look like and the artist made that happen."

Surprisingly, somewhat, he told us, "I didn't tell the family what I was doing until it was a final draft. I photocopied 10 copies and at Thanksgiving weekend, gave everyone a copy and told them what I had been doing.

"This is truly my hobby now."

*Alone Together* by Robert Hill is on Amazon as an ebook and as printed. Now available through BookLore.