

SANDY AUDEN – PRIME interview January 2003

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1. How and when did you two first meet?

1964 was the fateful year, two years before England's glorious triumph in the World Cup, and eleven years after we were both born. Mick is a month older than Len, which lends him that natural authority, while Len retains his youthful good looks.

We met at Ambrose Fleming Technical Grammar School in Ponders End, Enfield after passing the old Eleven Plus exam. Actually we were aware of each other without being close friends at school. It wasn't until we were eighteen, Mick just leaving school to begin a lifetime with Lloyds Bank (now a senior manager) and Len already a year or so into an apprenticeship as a lapidary (now office manager), that the real friendship began; it was created, as much of our lives have been blessed, by a woman – a rainy evening, a lonely drink in a pub (the Crown and Horseshoes in Enfield), and the shared reflections on the vagaries of love's labours lost.

The friendship blossomed over the next couple of years, during which our writing partnership began, and has been a jewel in both our lives ever since.

2. When did you first start writing?

Around 1971, in the circumstances described above. Len wrote a short horror story, Mick read it, and we discussed the merits and faults of it. We argued, we resisted criticism, we revised – it was the start of a natural pattern of collaboration. Mick then wrote a short atmospheric story, and the same process continued with each writing a story in turn.

Our first sale was a professional one; in 1974 we sold *Curtain Call* to London Mystery Magazine for £7. The story was later revised in the Sarob SHADOWS AT MIDNIGHT collection in 1999. It contained the 10 stories from the 1979 edition but they were all revised - a few grammar changes in some to complete scenes added and deleted in others. In addition we added 2 more stories, the revised *Curtain Call*, and a new story that fitted the style, *Do Ghosts Cast Shadows?* We were also accepted and published in 1974 in *Taste Of Fear* by the great Hugh Lamb, who liked the story *Benjamin's Shadow* (included in SHADOWS). That gave us the confidence to write more ghost stories, and the result was the first collection SHADOWS AT MIDNIGHT in 1979 published by William Kimber & Co.

The memory of acceptance of that book is still as fresh today as it was then. It was Christmas Eve and someone had to read the letter out to me over the 'phone. I then rang Len and we were both pleased to say the least.

3. Have you been writing together ever since? Or do you occasionally write solo or take any breaks?

We have always written together but the process has certainly evolved since the early days. Then we would write a story and the other heavily revised it. One might start a story and the other finish it. One might write a whole story and the other might add 000's of words or remove 000's of words.

Nowadays we tend to need only slight revisions on the original story, grammar, and typo's that kind of thing. With the Prime (<http://www.redsine.com/prime/>) collection INCANTATIONS (<http://www.maynard-sims.com/contents/Incantations.htm>) as an example, most of the stories in there had one voice in that there was one prime author (pun intended) for each story but the other had significant input; maybe with revised passages, with key ideas, or key scenes. It combines all the joys of writing solo – the creation, the pleasures of creating characters and stories – with the discipline of having to prove the worth of what you have written to someone else even before it is shown to an editor or publisher.

We have not taken breaks as such over the years but our output over the past five years exceeds our output over the previous fifteen. Why? Laziness in part, but more accurately a lack of confidence, a lack of focus and direction, and definitely an overload of life. We had divorces, births, deaths, miscarriages, work pressures, house moves, marriages – all the things that make life the rich tapestry it is, but we had them constantly and although over a fairly long space of time, it was diverting. Somehow the continual problems that came up never let the conscious mind concentrate on the business of writing - certainly the creative side suffered.

We wrote a lot during that period but everything needed revising and that has been done during the past five or so years, as well as writing tons of new stuff. The fact that we actually wrote quite a bit during that long relatively barren period, and that revising it all was fairly easy, suggests the unconscious writing mind was working overtime all the while.

4. How has the relationship evolved over time? (How was it in the early years, the middle years and what about today?)

The relationship is like a comfortable old shoe now, without the possible smell that might suggest.

In the early years we were very volatile; there were rows and pregnant, tense silences over the changing of a single word. The stories were very personal to us and for someone else to suggest change was difficult to accept.

The friendship was also developing; we were young and had different girlfriends, Len was in a rock band, we were growing up. We are individual people – obviously – and as such we have different tastes and opinions on things. Early on the way this manifested itself in the writing did cause some friction, with both thinking their opinion over a story was correct. Then we began to learn the benefits of writing together – the story boarding, the two heads better than one scenario – and for a while we used the differences to write better stories – friction fiction.

The next stage in the evolution of our friendship and writing partnership – two distinct things – was a more supportive style of discussion where we admitted our faults as writers and used our strengths to outweigh any weaknesses. The one who could write description would help the one who could write character, and vice versa.

The one who could start stories but struggled to finish, helped the one who could write endings if he had a beginning to take him there. That way we developed as writers and the honesty that was needed helped our friendship.

Then it developed into a lifeline of sanity for both of us as we battled through the nonsense that life threw at us. The friendship became far more important than the writing – actually it always had been, but sometimes we lost sight of the fact.

Now we are so comfortable with each other there is total honesty. We can complain, criticise, praise without fear of hurt feelings; about writing and about each other.

The Prime books novella *THE HIDDEN LANGUAGE OF DEMONS* is almost a snapshot of the evolving friendship. That started life in 1984 as an idea for a novel called *The Web*. We wrote it about four times but were never happy with it. Then we wrote the published version – and now we are storyboarding a lengthened novel version. We continually evolve as writers and as friends.

Actually during the ‘barren’ 15-year period we wrote about eleven novels – all destroyed – as well as numerous stories that after revision formed the bulk of our work that was published 1998 – 2000, and much of which is contained in the two Cosmos books *THE SECRET GEOGRAPHY OF NIGHTMARE* and *SELLING DARK MIRACLES*. Those two books also contain the complete stories from *SHADOWS* and from *ECHOES OF DARKNESS* (, the second Sarob Press book published in 2000, with the exception of the novella *MOTHS*, which was published by Cosmos as a separate novella.

The stories in *ECHOES* show the way the writing developed, and again echoes (these puns!) the way the friendship was evolving. Some are ghost stories but of a different type to *SHADOWS*.

5. How has your writing style evolved through time? (early, middle, now)

Our very early work was influenced by what we were reading at the time. Lots of the Pan series of Horror, anthologies 'edited' by Alfred Hitchcock, building up into the anthologies of August Derleth, Peter Haining, and even prior to discovering horror there were the comic books of *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic this and that*. All very persuasive to formative teenage minds. So the first stories were short horror pieces, either completely atmospheric with very little going on, or very gory with the supernatural more or less tacked on at the end.

Then we began to collect books, and did so with a passion that saw us at the Enfield market every Saturday and some Wednesdays taking away box loads of paperbacks of horror, ghost, and supernatural. There seemed to be dozens of titles published in those days. We would regularly travel up to London where there were seemingly plenty of bookshops where we could buy the newer hardback and paperbacks.

Amongst these books were anthologies by Richard Dalby and Hugh Lamb. The stories in them were often subtle and disturbing. That moved us into ghost story territory and we began to become influenced by the people who were influenced by M R James. We like James but preferred people like Wakefield, Malden, Caldecott and Benson. The stories that formed the *SHADOWS AT MIDNIGHT* collection were all from this period

(1974 - 1980). Some of the stories that became ECHOES OF DARKNESS were written during this period but revised later on, well about twenty years later. That applies to stories such as Coming Home, Mallory's Farm and Picnic.

Between 1980 and 1997 we felt as if we were thrashing about under the influence of several factors. There was no direct influence on our style - it was a middle period (albeit it a long one) - where we were finding our own true voice. As mentioned earlier we wrote loads during this 'barren' period but it all needed revision later, at a time when we had found who we were and what we wanted to write.

For this fifteen-year period (Yes 80-97 is 17 years but who's counting?) we tried crime novels, mainstream stories (a collection was almost accepted by Penguin!) suspense novels, as well as stories that could be categorised as horror but were actually a whole raft of styles from slipstream through ghost, from horror to psychological.

Then in July 1997 we were suddenly reborn. All our old stories were revised, the two Sarob collections were written and published, all the old stories outside these collections were revised and published in the small press, and we began to write new and stronger stories. After far too long in a personal wilderness we had found our own voice, and we had a direction. Everything in the last five or six years is down to that fact; we suddenly knew who we were and what we wanted.

The style now is modern, not influenced by any other writer, and is the culmination of our years of collaboration, meaning our two voices have created a separate style based on the best, and worst, of both of us.

Ah, yes, the rebirth of 1997. To tell you the truth, damned if we fully know what got us kicked off and started. We were pretty much settled domestically. Len re-married for five years, and happy; Mick married for ten years and his daughter three/four. We'd been writing on and off, mostly off, but had actually written quite a bit, when suddenly the old urge to write another ghost story, to get back to basics, hit us - to the extent that Len bought an old fashioned manual typewriter in the hope that it would kick start this new phase. The first (and only) thing he wrote on the cumbersome beast was the beginning to An Office In The Grays Inn Road, though at that time it had no title and was just a first page; more or less as it is now, but with no story to attach to it. Len showed it to Mick, who enthused, and we began to talk about ghost stories and our origins. It sort of snowballed from there.

Mick had picked up a small press booklet of ghost stories by chance some months before, when we were having a family weekend at a hotel in Tenterden, Kent, and we suddenly realised that there was a market for what we were writing. We realised that with publishers such as Ash Tree Press there was an interest in ghost and supernatural fiction, rather than the splatter stuff that had dominated the market for so long. Mick set about revising the older stories, editing them down to a length acceptable for these small press zines, and Len carried on writing new stuff, some of which were revisions of old stories long since consigned to the bin. Some of these he wrote almost word for word from the original - showing that the sub-conscious can carry an idea for pretty long periods of time.

Buoyed by a few acceptances, Tales Of The Grotesque & Arabesque, Terror Tales, Strix, Sci Frights, Roadworks, Dream Zone - and our discovery that Len could typeset and we could create a magazine ourselves on the computer - we launched Enigmatic Tales, and really since that time our feet haven't touched the ground. Enigmatic Tales was

born from a Monday night session and seemed a good idea at the time. It was immensely rewarding, but ate all our time (and lots of money), and then Darkness Rising came along, and all this time we were writing non-stop.

6. How has the content of your stories evolved through time? (early, middle, now)

As the style evolved so too did the content. The earlier ghost stories were very much influenced by such things as the atmosphere in an English country churchyard, the Green God Arthur Machen mythology, and the written style of the 1930's ghost stories. That meant we peopled our stories with crusty older gentlemen who drank port, played chess and discussed grave (pun again) issues at their smoky clubs. We actually wrote a novel that was set in a gentlemen's club. It was a series of inter-connected stories along the lines of the society in Straub's Ghost Story.

The story content of the ghost story period consisted of churches, country houses, haunted objects and the like. There was much made of ancient evil influencing the present, of innocents meddling in the present and unleashing past horrors. Haunted pieces of furniture, unholy ground, ancient practices long hidden.

As we began to write away from that style so the content evolved as well. We had content that was more urban, the settings moved into the towns and cities. The crime and suspense novels were all city based and featured tough cops and even tougher baddies.

Gradually as the complexity of the stories increased so did the content. The stories became less linear than before and the contents broader based. Modern influences such as email and the Internet became integral to the stories.

As we grew in confidence so we found more of our own lives being used in the stories. Not overtly, there are few if any autobiographical stories in our portfolio, but there are certainly areas of our lives that we have used. Feelings too began to be explored so that our own way of looking at life events became added to the stories and the way a character would behave was often influenced by our own perceptions and beliefs.

7. How have your characters evolved through time? (early, middle, now)

As mentioned above, during the early period, the early characters were a little crusty, liked cerebral pastimes and would enjoy brass rubbing, church architecture and rather bachelor pursuits. As we were both unhappily married at the time that is possibly why our characters preferred isolation to human companionship. The characters liked to be alone and were more often than not sad and rather lonely, and only inspired by their obsessive personal desires. Nothing autobiographical there!

During the middle period of our writing, when we as people were floundering to discover a direction in life, it is not surprising that our characters seemed afloat on a sea of uncertainty as well. There were characters that hated themselves, who were selfish and adrift. The characters lived in stories that were themselves not fully formed so the people in them had incompleteness about them.

From 1997 onwards, as our present period took hold, so the characters took on a whole new demeanour. They actually developed as a story developed; being different at

the end of a story than they were at the start. They are much rounder characters in that they are not wholly good or wholly evil, there are shades of grey rather than the black and white images we wrote earlier - as our ability was developing. We used to write in black and white but now we write in colour (sounds like a sound byte).

Now the characters feel like real people, people we might know in our lives.

8. How have those little crises of life you mentioned impacted your stories through time? Have there been any spanners in the works that have caused a sharp change in direction?

By making us richer as people - not in the monetary sense unfortunately – it has led to our writing being more relevant. Rather than the stories being artificial as many of the earlier ones might have seemed, with the influences being from the outside rather than from personal experience, they now seem more real. The stories are often based, or certainly contain some reference to, events that have changed us, and this makes them deeper, more liable to strike a chord with the reader.

As William Simmons wrote in his Cemetery Dance review of INCANTATIONS. "Maynard and Sims conjure horrors by first establishing the believability of natural, objective places and people. Their characters are people we know and see everyday: men and women struggling through bad relationships, going to work and plodding along the best they can until, quite suddenly, their worlds are invaded by suggestions of evil, manipulative powers just outside the rim of understanding, or worse, by evils answering the summons of their minds."

We have been altered as people because of what we have experienced in life and it would be unnatural if that didn't translate its self into our writing. When you write you are exploring your own soul. When you create characters you are giving them the flesh of your own life force, letting a little bit about yourself be revealed, pushing out into the world naked and alone to be judged and stared at.

If our writing life can be segmented into early, middle and present, it could be said the early stories were born from a desire to write and to create a replica of what we wanted from life - a little peace and contentment. The middle period was thrashing about in primal uncertainty with various pressures and difficulties distracting from any planned route. There was plenty going on in the sub conscious mind and that enabled the stories from this period to be so successfully revised later on. The present period is one of maturity and some satisfaction. We are developed as people, though one never stops learning or growing, and this is reflected in the writing.

So far as direction is concerned, we had so many changes, mostly self-imposed, during the middle years, as we sought success in different styles and challenges, that spanners were a weekly event. We would start a project only to be deflected onto another path. Only now when we feel confident have we put the spanners toolbox away.

The crises have influenced our work in that they have given us different perspectives on life and that translates into the characters and the plots.

Stories in INCANTATIONS, and in FALLING INTO HEAVEN

(<http://www.maynard-sims.com/contents/falling%20into%20heaven.htm>) are closer to mainstream than basic horror, or at least some of them are.

9. Why did you get into editing and publishing and did your reason for continuing to edit/publish change through time?

When we began to start writing in earnest again, July 1997, it was obvious we had a lot of ground to make up. We had been writing for a long time, but hadn't sent anything out for possible publication for about 15 years, so the name wasn't known.

That began to change as stories were accepted by the many small press magazines that existed at the time, but even so there was a wide gap between our experience and achievements. Coupled with that was a sense that we had something to share with people that might help aspiring writers. We had been around a long time, had learned lessons the hard way, and it seemed to us that we might be able to give a little something back to the genre.

So, one Monday night at Len's house, after a regular session of story discussion, nostalgia, and okay a few beers, we said – and neither of us will admit to having actually uttered the words – 'Let's start a small press magazine.' Enigmatic Tales was born.

It seemed to be well received straight away. So much so in fact that we were swamped with good quality submissions. That led to Enigmatic Novellas being launched, followed by the similar Enigmatic Variations, both for longer stories; and later Enigmatic Electronic on the web that allowed us to publish stories that didn't fit the guidelines of ET. All seemed to be very well received, and we managed to sell out all the copies produced. We were able to push length up to 200 pages at a regular quarterly schedule thanks to funding in part from the Arts Council.

That later failed to be renewed and we were unable to continue at the same production quality or title quantity, and we'd really didn't want to compromise our standards so we closed Enigmatic Press. In a way we feel now that it was probably not such a bad thing. Our time was being eaten up with publishing and editing, and we were getting hardly any time to write and precious little energy left over for real life. When we'd begun we'd been charged up with the excitement of it all, and gradually there developed a genuine enjoyment at the creation of something that seemed to be worthwhile making an effort over, but in the end it was just a hard slog.

Then, shortly after Enigmatic closed, Sean Wallace of Cosmos Books (and later Prime) offered us the chance to edit without the hassle of publishing. Darkness Rising was created from the vision of Enigmatic but gave us a wider brief with regard to content and with less work involved. The sheer weight of hours required to edit, produce, handle distribution, artwork, proofing is immense. With DR we were reading stories, editing them, and sending a completed volume of the series to Sean. He and his team did the rest.

It is disappointing the publishing schedule of DR has not been more consistent but the quality of product is first class and the contents have drawn praise in reviews and awards nominations.

It is still time consuming to edit a series such as DR, and the decision to move to an annual volume commencing June 2003 is a welcome one.

10. How did it impact your working relationship when you started? Is the relationship any different now when you edit together?

The editing began once the present period of our writing partnership was underway so the issues that might have been there at the beginning are long since resolved. What that meant was we divided up the work with Enigmatic to compliment our particular skills. Len produced the website, the magazine production, typesetting and so on, while Mick handled most of the editing, finance, correspondence, marketing and distribution. You need a team to produce a magazine and we were our team.

If a story was needed for an anthology or when the muse struck we simply moved as much of the work as we could to one of us while the other wrote the story.

Now, with DR, Mick handles most of the editing, and that left Len free last year to produce most of our first novel. A publisher is currently reading SHELTER in USA. We have submitted all the current DR volumes to Sean, and DR6 is due February 2003, DR7 March 2003, and the first of the 125000 word large annual volumes is due June 2003.

11. How have your editing skills evolved through time? (Early, middle, now)

I think we may have some now whereas when we first started we were real novices. We tried replying to each rejection, explaining at length why we were declining. That was part of our mission to help newcomers. What it did mean though was we trod a fine line between explanation and rejection. It only backfired once when a UK writer (a doubtful description actually) wrote back a really rude letter 'explaining' his story and coming to the conclusion that as it was marvellous we were clearly deficient. He has since disappeared without trace.

All we have ever done is publish and accept stories we liked. Our taste may not suit everyone but it is all subjective isn't it? What we like will not please everyone but that is not what we have tried to do. We have simply tried to create forums where writers can see their debut story published, more established writers can be published in a half decent product, and the exposure the writers (and artists) get is reasonable.

The more editing we have done, it is inevitable that the better we have got. Nowadays it is relatively easy to know within the first page if a story will be suitable. Darkness Rising under Prime offers such a wide range of stories that content is rarely an issue, so it comes down to quality. With our desire to offer new writers a platform there is a possibility we select stories other editors would reject. That doesn't worry us as we maintain that subjective argument throughout – we accept stories we like, just as we write stories we like, not stories we think need to be written a certain way to please someone else.

12. How has your publishing matter evolved through time? (Early, middle, now)

Well we stopped publishing of course with Enigmatic back in 2000. So far as editing is concerned, Enigmatic Tales was very much a traditional arena for traditional stories. The guidelines said something about no swearing, no sex, we keep that to our private lives. To an extent that was a continuation of the early writing period – remember we had just spent time revising the early stories. So you see the editing has a cycle of early, middle and present just the same as the writing, though over a much shorter space of time.

The Enigmatic name became synonymous with traditional supernatural stories. We were known as Mick and Len the ghost story men. Stories were of varied length, from 200 to 20000. With Novellas and Variations we were able to promote longer works, again from some promising beginners.

Gradually we found that a little restricting, and although we prefer subtle stories to brazen ones, we began to yearn to accept shall we say stronger stories. So we used the website to launch Electronic and there we were able to publish stories that had a wider range and some blood and gore.

With Darkness Rising we have been able to publish a whole range of stories. Ghosts, straight horror, urban, supernatural, slipstream, psychological, fantasy, and mainstream. The June volume has a 29000 novella in it as well as a story of 800 words.

Probably as we have evolved as people, and certainly our writing has evolved, so it must follow that our editing changes as well. We accept a far wider realm of material nowadays; partly because of the different guidelines we have given Darkness Rising, but also because we like a very wide range of stories.

13. Where would you like to go next with your writing in terms of content?

There is a 38000 novella THE SEMINAR coming out from Sarob Press (<http://home.freeuk.net/sarobpress/>) in summer 2003. The book is coming out in limited edition hardcover, limited edition deluxe hardcover and sewn paperback. It is a witch story about six teenagers on a writing seminar who battle against the forces of evil. The story involves a group of late teens that attend a writing seminar at a country manor house in Dorset England. The house is owned and the courses run by The Senice Foundation. Far from being altruistic, the Foundation is actually a cover for a centuries old witch who uses the Foundation as a recruiting agency for fresh victims to feed her constant need for new bodies with which she rejuvenates herself. It also becomes apparent that Lisa is the blood relative of the original Isabella. She has been lured to the manor house for a sinister reunion.

INCANTATIONS was our third story collection, and the fourth is already written. Sarob Press has accepted FALLING INTO HEAVEN for summer 2004 publication. There are stories in there that evolve from the style of the stories in the third collection, but far more that push aside any pre-conceptions people might have about our writing. These are stories that have the supernatural as a backdrop but that aside they could be mainstream stories. Stories such as Sliding Down The Slippery Slip, which has a lesbian orgy as its plot but masks so much more; or Calling Down The Lightning which has the Irish Troubles as a background and could be about relationships; or Soaking Wet Without A Boat, which is about levels of pain, physical and emotional; or Flour White, Spindle Thin, which has a couple facing up to an inability to have children. As William Simmons says in an articulate introduction, "Warnings of supernatural presences and disaster are cleverly, *quietly* given to us beforehand. Yet so subtle are said warnings, and so very engaging the characters, that our minds co-conspire with the authors, making us pay such attention to the complexities of human interaction and transformation that when the echoes of fantasy materialize into physical, undeniable threat, we're surprised and titillated." The same

formats as *THE SEMINAR* will be published. The book is about 84000 words long and features 14 stories, most of which are unpublished and will remain so until the book is released.

Our first completed and retained novel *SHELTER* is currently being read in USA and we have everything crossed for that. This is story about a Moroccan Water God and an ancient curse. The evil is entirely mythical and is a creation very much in the mythos of the Tashkai we created in *MOTHS*. Set in the present day, the catalyst for the evil begins on active duty in North Africa after the Second World War when William Charteris, head of a titled family from England, fathers a child by a local Arab girl. The girl, and the resulting son, is Verani, an ancient race of creatures who need humans to feed from and to perpetuate their noble species of Moroccan Water Gods. The consequences once William, and his loyal associate Tom Hooper bring the boy to England, reach into the present day. Why a Moroccan Water God? The story is about revenge and the intrusion of real life problems into a successful life. The mythical creature is a symbol of the issues we all have to face in life at some time, but made dramatic and frightening by the creation.

Our current writing project is story boarding the novel version of *THE HIDDEN LANGUAGE OF DEMONS*. As the story began life about 20 years ago as a novel, and was written at about 90000 words it is quite ironic we are revising the novella back to and way beyond the original length. The novella was well received but a few people mentioned that they wanted more depth, more background about the characters. This is what we are doing now, and adding far more than was ever in the original story. It begins now, in its planned form, when the triplets are boys, and carries them through their early life, giving a background to them and reasons why they each took different paths. It then fleshes out the rather staccato style of the novella version, adding depth and width. It will have a different title, as the story will be very different.

After that? Our short story creative juices have been moving for some time onto a more mainstream wavelength and it is probable we will write some non-supernatural stories for specific markets. These stories are likely to echo a series we wrote and abandoned in the 1980's. Stories about people and their lives without a supernatural backdrop. The only reason these stories might not linger in the darkness so much is partly to try something new, partly to try different markets, and partly to give voice to the various lines of creation that still persist in both of us. There are though plenty of anthologies that come out regularly so supernatural stories will never be abandoned. Especially as the frisson of excitement that we still get quite regularly from reading supernatural stories, and even from just browsing through the extensive library of books we have accumulated through the years, remains if anything far deeper than ever. That's not even to mention the hundreds of horror films we have.

Novels will continue as our main focus for now. We have a third supernatural novel planned out, as well as two thrillers based in a UK setting and a police procedural set in USA. Both of us also want to write a mainstream novel at some time, so who knows?

14. Would either of you ever consider going solo in the future? Why/Why not?

No. The benefits of writing in tandem are so well suited to us now, and so well embedded that there really is no point.

The stories are virtually written solo now in any case so there is nothing to be gained in separating with those. The only possible avenue that may require separate time is with the possible mainstream novels. If they are to be infused with any sense of soul, of personal experience then a work of that length and that subject matter (whatever that might be) would have to be solo. Whether it was presented for publication as by Len or Mick or as a joint pseudonym is another matter.

15. Do you have any plans for editing or publishing projects in the future?

No. We did have a wonderful anthology, *Cold Touch*, co-edited with William P Simmons but Prime cancelled it. We also had *Best Of Enigmatic Tales* but that was axed as well.

We have delivered *Darkness Rising 6*, which was supposed to be February 2003 but will now be (hopefully) March, and *Darkness Rising 7*, which may be March or April, and finally *Darkness Rising*, the new annual volume of 125000 words due June 2003. We haven't begun a reading period for the 2004 volume.

With so many demands on our time we have had to be very careful we don't get into overload. Our priority has always been our own writing, but editing, and previously publishing as well, took up far more time. That has eased with editing only, and an annual anthology should fit in nicely but we'll have to wait and see.

That's not to say that if an interesting offer to edit a decent anthology came along we wouldn't be interested!

16. Do you think you'll ever stop writing?

We have, lots of times. If we had been as consistent as we are now, over all the years we have been around we would have so much more published. There were always excuses to stop, reasons not to start again.

Nowadays though we can't get enough of it. The desire to write is brighter than it has ever been. So, no, there are no conceivable circumstances that we can see a halt to our writing.

We want to get better and better in the supernatural genre. We want to branch out and write different subjects and in genres. Stories, novels, we are so full of ideas and enthusiasm that going out to work everyday is a real pain in the posterior.

Hopefully there will continue to be a Maynard & Sims for years to come yet.

Thanks for this opportunity to 'talk' Sandy. It's been a real pleasure.