

Shawn Olson's

Creative Arts Newsletter

You may or may not recognize my name, but I have been a resident in this neighborhood for nearly a quarter of a century. For a few years you may have read my reports and columns in the *Westside Messenger*. Or you may have seen me at the basketball court grunting with the teenagers or taking kids on expeditions to nearby marshes to find salamanders and raspberries.

My purpose in printing this little newsletter is to share with my community some of the projects I have been developing over the last few years. I also hope to share some inspiration for creativity.

One of the things I have noticed over my life is the direction the young culture is taking with the advent of video games, television and computers. Too many of our kids spend too much of their time in front of a video screen instead of exploring their world and developing real-life interactivity. I am not one to ban computers and video games (both are important parts of my own life) but I am one to feel concerned that the virtual world is far too pervasive in the lives of young people.

Part of the reason that kids spend so much time in front of TVs and monitors has to do with the fact that kids are much like adults—if there is nothing else to do, why not find an easy entertainment? The source of resorting to television and video games as a primary outlet is a



Above. Salamander tadpoles from vernal pools on the west side of Columbus.

Spotlight Link

www.metroparks.net Learn more about the parks in Central Ohio, including educational events and programs.

Ambushed →

lack of education that parents, communities and cultures instill on kids. When parents spend all their time watching TV... that sets a standard for the kids.

The problem of outlets is further hampered by repressive communities that look at kids not as valuable members but as nuisances. Certainly all adults have an uneasy feeling about teenagers congregating in their communities—but that is only because parents as a whole have not raised a generation of respectful teenagers. Communities shoot themselves in the foot by ignoring this problem and alienating kids—*don't play here; go somewhere else and play*. What are kids to do when their basketball courts are taken down or fences are put up around their playgrounds?

Positive, productive and educational outlets are hard to come by when parents and communities don't present those opportunities to the kids. Our kids need more good role models if they ever hope to lift culture up rather than pull it down.

Ask kids what they are doing and too often they say "Nothing." Too often kids say they are bored. Is this

because life is inherently boring? No... I think kids are bored because they have been taught that life can be lived vicariously and passively through television and video games. Instead of playing basketball, kids play it on a video screen; instead of making their own music, kids watch MTV; instead of writing their own stories, they watch *Ed, Edd and Eddy*.

The role of parents and community leaders should be to present challenges for kids. That means parents and community leaders have to learn new things themselves and take on the responsibility of guiding youngsters.

I do not know how often I can afford to put together this newsletter, but I will try to share some ideas in print as often as I can. Hopefully I can share something of interest (via photos, words and art) for both parents and kids that piques interest and curiosity and inspiration. You can always find more of my thoughts at www.shawnolson.net as it is much cheaper to post articles online rather than print them.

Shawn Olson



Feel FREE to get Creative

www.artisticnetwork.net

Get Out of this World



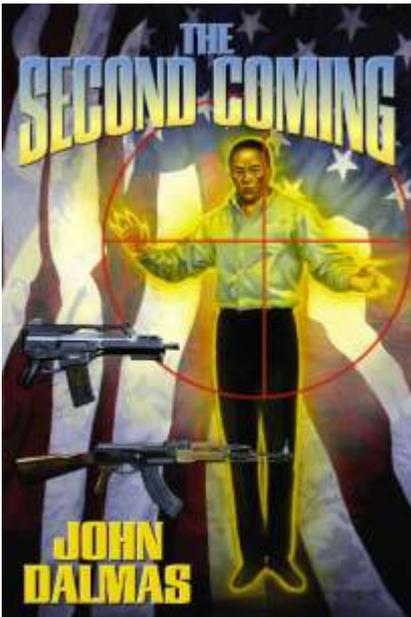
If you are a science-fiction fan, you may be happy to hear that long-time sci-fi veteran John Dalmas has transported his base of operations to Central Ohio. Author of 27 published novels over the last three decades, Dalmas is a mainstay in the science fiction genre.

When asked to give advice to young writers, Dalmas has a lot to offer. His website has an entire page of advice ranging from breaking into the publishing arena to dealing with agents. He even breaks against some tradition by saying that “It’s OK to use a prolog (regardless of what your professor told you).”

I shared a piece of writing wisdom with John: “Show, don’t tell.” John quickly came back with: “Show when it’s appropriate. Tell when it’s appropriate. You have to do what’s best for the story at that moment.”

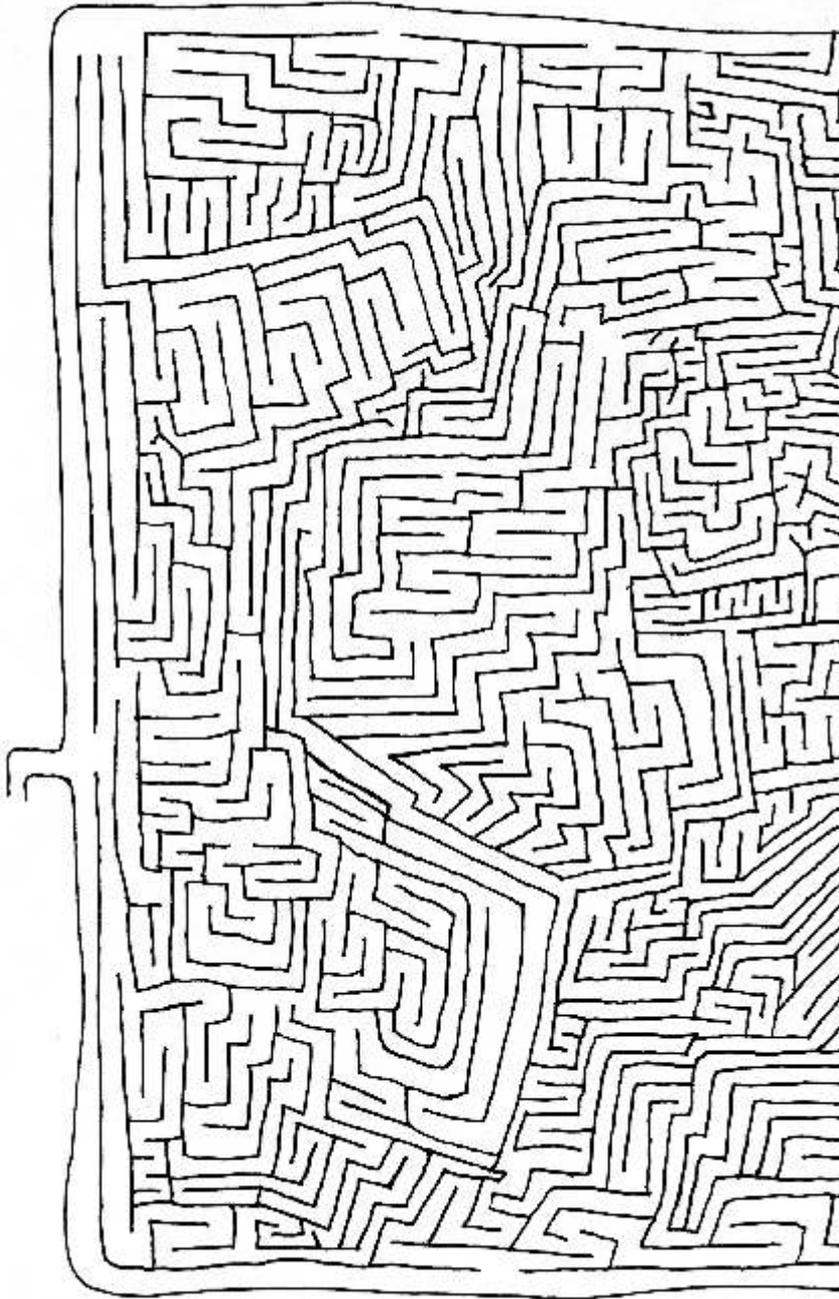
Point well taken. That is why he is the well-known author and I am a journalist.

Find more about John, including a list of his books, at www.sfga.org/members/dalmas/.

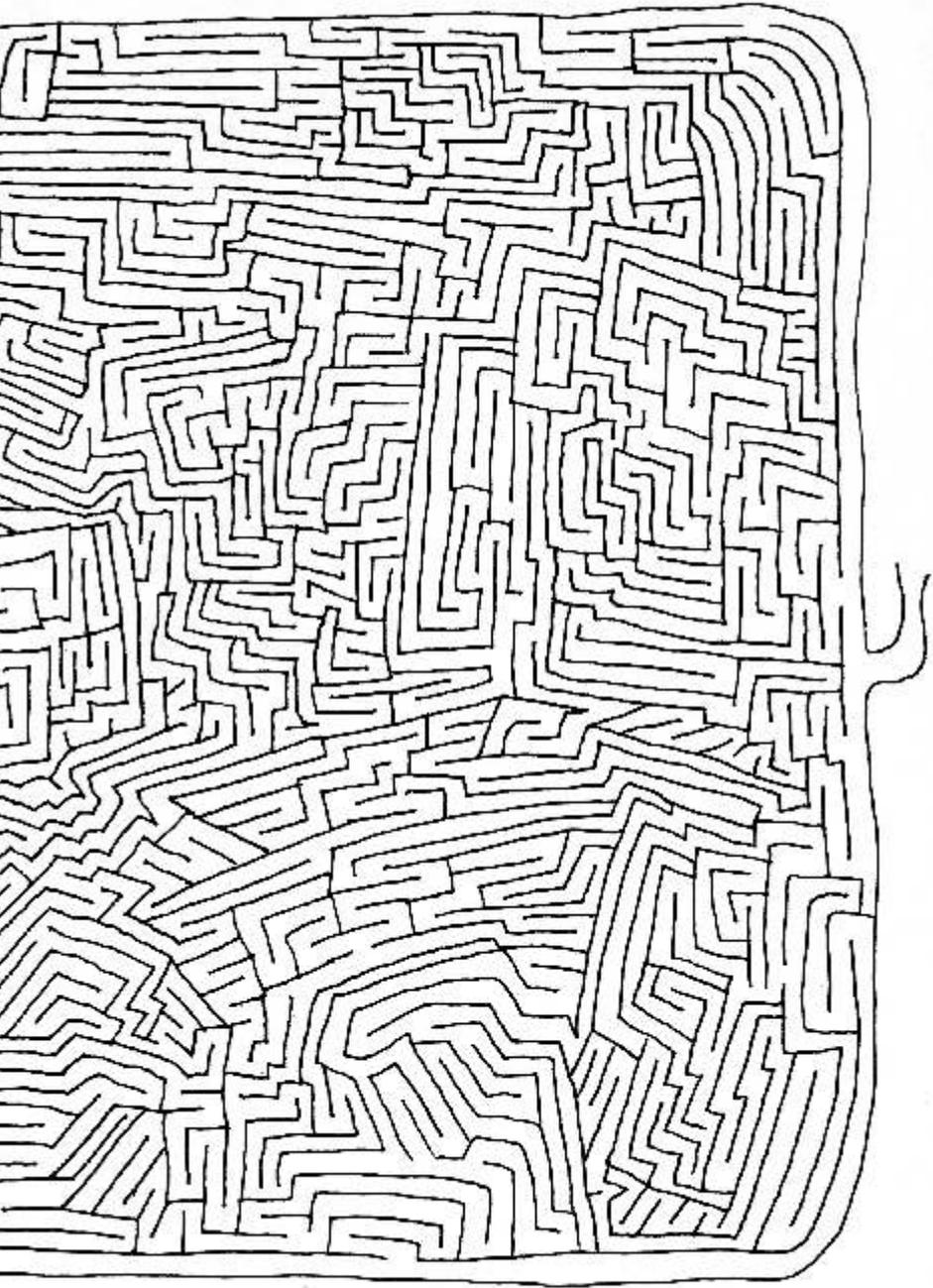


Above Left: Portrait of John Dalmas. **Left:** Cover of Dalmas’ latest novel *The Second Coming*, an apocalyptic tale where a spiritual guru is targeted by fundamentalists assassins.

Amazing Challenge



Try to find your way through the maze. You can even cheat and start from the end... I bet it will take you longer than you expect it to take.





the EARLY YEARS

Ohio has History?

More things have happened in Ohio than you may realize

It's a well-known fact that Ohio is the birthplace of aviation. The Wright brothers invented the first airplane in Dayton, Ohio. It is only fitting that Ohioans John Glenn and Neil Armstrong were cornerstones of the journey into outer space.

What's not so well-known is that Ohio has a lot more history. Ohio was a core of the Native American resistance to European settlers; Tecumseh (a Shawnee) was one of the most celebrated Native American warriors—he was from this area. The Adena culture was here almost two thousand years ago, followed by the Fort Ancient culture.



Mastodon Tooth



Above: A trilobite fossil. Trilobites were large arthropods that flourished on Earth for over three hundred million years. They are now extinct. Their remains can be found in Ohio--it is our state fossil.

These cultures built famous burial and ceremonial mounds throughout Ohio, including the great Serpent Mound which is the largest earthen effigy mound on Earth.

Many creatures have walked the lands now known as Ohio that no longer exist except as impressions in stone. Ohio has been the home of ancient beasts like the Mastodon and Saber-Tooth tiger. Ancient oceans once covered this area.

World-changing events have happened here. A meteor collided into what is now Adams County over three hundred million years ago, leaving a crater eight kilometers across. The Serpent Mound is located within the impact crater.

There is a lot that has happened here in Ohio... and you can expect a lot more to keep happening here. Learn more about Ohio history at www.ohiohistory.org.

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The Creative Arts Newsletter is a community educational project sponsored by Shawn Olson in Columbus, Ohio. The purpose of this newsletter is to challenge parents and children to learn more about their local world and to use their minds creatively.

This newsletter is distributed freely in Central Ohio at libraries, coffee shops and other public places.

If you would like to help with this project, feel free to call Shawn Olson at 614-276-0311. Help can come in the form of distributing copies, submitting educational material and/or helping pay for printing fees.

Learn more about Olson at www.shawnolson.net; see Olson's keynote arts-promotion site at www.artisticnetwork.net. There you will find free tools to share your creative work such as poetry, artwork, photography, music and more.

Ambushed

You may never have known it, but there are vicious predators lurking in your backyard every summer. Underneath flowers, hiding in the pedals, is a miniature monster waiting in ambush. It's the ambush bug.

A form of assassin bug, the ambush bug has a long proboscis that it jabs into prey like flies and bees; it then pumps toxins into its victim that liquefies the subject into a tasty treat (from the ambush bug's point of view).

Like the praying mantis, the ambush bug is generally slow in moving. It waits for prey and moves slowly when the wind rustles the leaves. Unlike the praying mantis, however, the ambush bug is very small. Most I have found are under half an inch long.

So as the summer wears on, see if you can find one of these little monsters on goldenrods and Queen Anne's Lace (the white flower in these photos).

