



Author Robert Brown sits to discuss his first novel, **Precarious Balance**.

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It takes a lot to confront our pasts. Social media is riddled with memes and well-intended nuggets of unsolicited advice suggesting the same. Psychologists likely fill weekly schedules with patients set on discussing exactly that, or, perhaps, set on not discussing exactly that (and therein lies the reason for the therapy session).

Bristol resident Robert (Bob) Brown decided to take it a step further, gather together elements of his past and stitch them together into a story. His story. Not necessarily biographical, but something more akin to creative non-fiction where Brown's real life experiences are expanded generously in fiction. Here, he takes the stacks of essay-style writings he has accumulated over the years and makes them into a single cohesive thread.

Precarious Balance is Brown's first novel and he partnered with just-across-the-river Burnstown Publishing House to bring it to fruition.

The general narrative of the novel was born of Brown's own struggles with confronting his past. As he says, "all you seem to get when you confront anything is confrontation." Sessions with a therapist suggested that he write things down and thus began a long journey of late nights rattling thoughts, events and emotions into a word processing machine. For years, these remained printed and bottled up in a briefcase tucked away in the corner of his home in Morewood, Ont. and, for many years after, in his home in Bristol, Que.

The therapist's suggestion generally worked, though there was still something missing.

So, about six years ago, Brown decided to change that and see what could be made of his collective writings. Through various interactions with the Canadian Author's Association, he first pared the collection down by two-thirds and then set out to refine the content with the helping hand of editor John Stevens, from Burnstown. At times graphic, it is a fast-paced tale inviting the reader to consider: "We all have trust issues. We all keep secrets. We all speak our own truths." Written with little to no pretense, or perhaps full of invention, the novel feels very real, and one is left unclear as to which parts are fiction and which are not. This, it seems, is exactly what Brown intended lest his past be revealed in its entirety. He is not quite ready for that. After all, he has

secrets too.

Brown intends to hold book launches in the months ahead. In the meantime, if you are looking for your own copy, contact Burnstown Publishing House.

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