



The Republican.

Novel's vampire hero western gunslinger

Wednesday, September 13, 2006

By **KARL M. REXER**

CHICOPEE - It's been some time since 35-year-old Mark J. Tarrant finished writing his first novel.

"I wrote my first book in high school," Tarrant recalled recently. "I finished it my senior year, but it wasn't good," he said with a laugh.

That book never saw the light of day, a fate he's hoping won't be shared by the hero of Tarrant's new book, "The Blood Rider," which he's planning to self-publish next spring or summer.

"The Blood Rider" tells the story of Ezekiel Carson, once a devout man of God condemned to roam the Wild West as a gun-slinging vampire. Ezekiel sets off on a quest for redemption when he meets school teacher William Hamilton and agrees to help him find his missing brother, a preacher who has disappeared from a remote New Mexico mining town.

"I'd never seen a vampire as a hero in a western series," Tarrant said, explaining what inspired him to create Ezekiel Carson. "I thought it would be a new twist to have a cursed gunman roaming the frontier at night."

Tarrant, who lives on Gilmore Street, says he's always had an interest in fantasy. "Even as a kid in elementary school, I always went to the library and read books about the paranormal and monsters," he said. "I'm into a little bit of everything, but I'm not fanatical. I guess I'm a multigenre guy."

"The Blood Rider" is the first in a planned series titled "Blood and Spurs," with the first four already written and two others outlined according to Tarrant.

"The rest are up in the air," he said. "It's a classic quest. Every book is a different town, a different problem and a different set of issues."

"There's a lot of research because of the historical aspect," Tarrant continued. "I'm trying to stay true to the west, but still have that paranormal flair."

©2006 The Republican

© 2006 MassLive.com All Rights Reserved.