

Local authors release new books



Your Turn
Judy Christie
Guest Columnist

Each year I look forward to new releases by North Louisiana authors, and the steady stream always inspires me.

One of my most anticipated for 2021 came out early this month — “Matthew’s Rise,” a middle-grade debut novel by retired Caddo teacher Debra Spearman.

Several years ago, Spearman contacted me with questions about her manuscript, and we visited over coffee at Barnes & Noble, back when we could sit and chat without worrying about a pandemic. It’s been a pleasure to watch her patient journey to publication with the respected Pelican Publishing Company. While I got to read an early draft of the novel, I’m eagerly awaiting my order of the final version — and think regional adult readers as well as younger readers will enjoy this story.

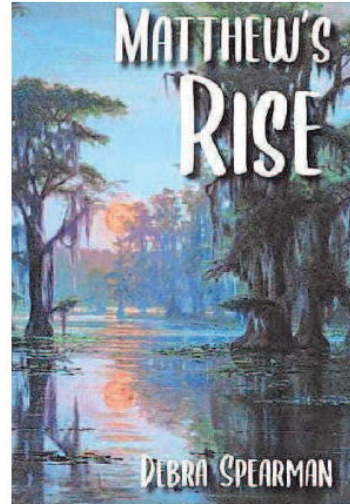
In “Matthew’s Rise,” Matthew, 11, and his friends investigate a suspicious fire in the woods near Caddo Lake, discovering a Caddo Indian mound and an enigmatic new neighbor. They are soon pitched into a race to save the burial site from desecration. Spearman’s well-drawn setting and intriguing history lesson, along with likable characters, make the book both engaging and thought-provoking.

For more about the author, who is working on her second novel, see www.DebraSpearman.com. The book is available as a trade paperback from your favorite bookseller. For more on the publisher, see www.pelicanpub.com.

Caddo library employee announces romance novel

“To Love Again” by Caddo resident B. Marshall Gistarb, is available on Amazon.com in both digital and paperback formats. The novel is a traditional romance with Christian values and is about a relationship “that tests the belief and faith of one individual and renews the faith of another.”

An avid reader of romance novels and a Shreve Memorial Library employee, Gistarb said she not only places her characters in challenging roles where



“Matthew’s Rise,” by Debra Spearman, follows Matthew and his friends as they investigate a suspicious fire in the woods near Caddo Lake, discovering a Caddo Indian mound and an enigmatic new neighbor.

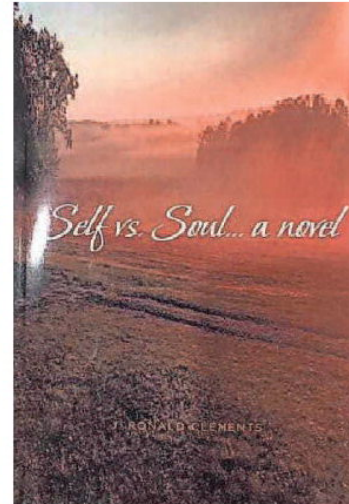
their faith, trust and love are tested but teaches the importance of family togetherness.

To contact the author: bmgistarb@gmail.com.

Area author releases suspense novel

North Louisiana resident J. Ronald Clements has released “Self vs. Soul...a novel,” described as a suspenseful tale of a man driven by the emotions of love and fear. The protagonist, Steven Heard, goes from a small Texas town to London and beyond as an executive who endures seasons of injustice and hatred in pursuit of God’s destiny for his life.

Clements’ wrote his first novel at Louisiana Tech in the last 1960s, when professor Francis Gwaltney, himself a prolific novelist, mentored Clements. His day jobs have included farming, teaching, high-tech electronics, aerospace and the oil and gas industry. His bio reads like a suspense novel itself: He was in Germany when the Berlin Wall fell, was held hostage at an Egyptian military camp in the Sahara, has been harassed by police in China and has



“Self vs. Soul,” planned as the first of a trilogy and written by J. Ronald Clements, is dedicated to well-known Civil Rights leader and hero C.O. Simpkins, a friend of the author. COURTESY PHOTOS

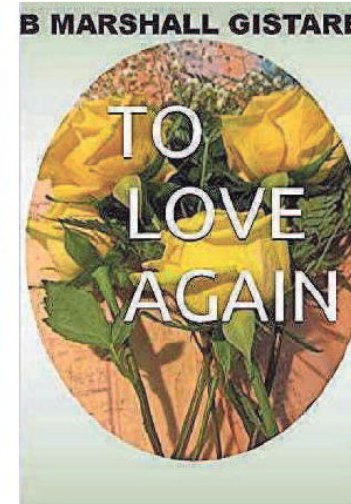
lived in Paris for four years and Singapore for two.

He said he embarked on his recent novel after a visit at a United Methodist Church homecoming in North Louisiana where he was told to “find something that you think pleases God, and do that.” I found that to be a comforting reassurance and finished the story several months later.

The novel, planned as the first in a “Self Vs. Soul” trilogy, is dedicated to well-known Civil Rights leader and hero C.O. Simpkins, a friend of the author. It was published by Covenant Books, a Christian owned and operated publishing house in South Carolina.

A fun read from an author who grew up in Texas and Kansas

If you are tired of political battles, you might want to slip away to a small-town fight over fried chicken in “The Chicken Sisters” by K.J. Dell’Antonia. This novel which came out last year and has been well-reviewed in numerous places, takes you to a small Kansas town where two sisters and their family fight over the perfect fried chicken recipe on a re-



“To Love Again,” by B. Marshall Gistarb, is a novel about a traditional romance with Christian values and is about a relationship “that tests the belief and faith of one individual and renews the faith of another.”

ality TV show. This is a fun, fast read with quirky characters, sisters who love each other but can’t quite get along and family secrets. This is a Reese’s Book Club pick and a New York Times bestseller.

The author lives on a small farm in New Hampshire, but “retains an abiding love for her childhood in Texas and Kansas.” Be warned: You’ll want to run right out to your favorite local chicken joint and pick up supper when you finish.

If you’re a local author with a new release

The Book Lover Column features authors with area ties, and I love to mention new releases and local book events, which are largely held online these days. Please email me your book news: Judy@JudyChristie.com.

Book columnist Judy Christie is the author of 18 books, including the nonfiction: “Before and After: The Incredible Real-Life Stories of Orphans Who Survived the Tennessee Children’s Home Society.” To sign up for her e-newsletter: www.judychristie.com. Follow her on Facebook at [JudyChristie/Author](https://www.facebook.com/JudyChristie/Author).