

# THE CASEBOOK

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## NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Two new books from small presses that we recently read and liked very much are *Wet Desert* by Gary Hansen, and *Antler Dust* by Mark Stevens. Both are the authors' first published novels, but neither reads like a first novel sometimes does. Instead, they are polished works based upon relatively new plot ideas.

*Wet Desert* is about tracking down a terrorist on the Colorado River. Grant Stevens, a mid-level manager for the Bureau of Reclamation, only wanted to build dams. "He had joined the Bureau to build dams, big concrete dams like Hoover and Glen Canyon. Their sheer size and power hypnotized him even after all these years as an engineer. As a child, he had toured Hoover Dam with his family while they vacationed in Las Vegas. At the age of seven, while looking down the six hundred foot face, he had announced to his parents that he would build dams when he grew up." He never imagined he would be swept into a desperate race against an environmental terrorist bent on restoring the Colorado River by blowing up the dams. Left temporarily in charge of the Bureau, Grant must react when the first dam is attacked. He faces the unthinkable task of mitigating the massive flood roaring down the Colorado. He must use his engineering skills, river knowledge and plenty of gut instinct in an attempt to outmaneuver the terrorist. The political and managerial problems he must overcome both within and without the Bureau seem all too realistic.

The author, Gary Hansen, is a product of the west. He wrote *Wet Desert* while living in Mission Viejo, California where he worked as an electrical engineer for twenty years. He is an avid outdoorsman and often visited the Colorado River on weekends. He loves water skiing, snow skiing, dirt biking, hiking and camping. He is also an emeritus SCUBA Instructor, and has dived at locations all over the world. Gary was raised on a dairy farm in Cache Valley, Utah, in the small town of Trenton. He recently returned to Utah and lives in Kaysville. He and his wife, Becca, have four children.

*Antler Dust* set in Colorado, in and around Glenwood Springs and the Colorado Flat Tops wilderness, tackles the issues of animal rights and hunting. But the author, Mark Stevens, says he has no axe to grind. "I think animal rights activists have some positive, strong points to make and have been very valuable in helping us all raise our awareness about our place as human beings on the planet and to degree to which we exploit animals. I also love a good steak and