



An Interview With Happy Ali's Author Trevor Hughes

BY HAPPY ALI

18 FEBRUARY 2022

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Today *Happy Ali* talks to author Trevor Hughes about his life, his writing, *Happy Ali*, and his new book, the intriguingly titled *The Book of Piles*.

HA Trevor, welcome to Happy Ali.

TH Thanks. It's a pleasant change to be on this side of *Happy Ali*. I normally write for it rather than being the subject of an article.

HA Let's start with *Happy Ali*. How did you come to be involved?

TH A couple of years ago an old friend of mine, Arthur Koeman – we play on the same squash team – suggested that he'd like to start an online newspaper reporting only positive news. I thought it was a great idea. Arthur had read a couple of my novels and asked me to write for it, which I did. To date about 130 articles!

HA You're a long-term Hong Kong resident. How long have you lived there?

TH Over 30 years now, though I think Arthur's been here even longer.

HA So why did you come to Hong Kong?

TH I graduated with a Law Degree from Sheffield University but decided I didn't want to spend my life in some provincial solicitor's office in England. I spent a while driving a laundry van, then putting up television aerials and in the meantime applied for a job in Hamburg in Germany. The company said my German wasn't good enough but offered me a place in their London office. They had several overseas postings and after two years they were so impressed with me that in 1977 they sent me to Bangladesh for three years.

HA That must have been a tough posting.

TH Yes, in some ways. But I was 25 years old, had a big house with a garden full of tropical plants and coconut and mango trees and four servants so it wasn't too bad! The best thing was that from there I could travel to India, Nepal, Burma and Thailand as well as down to the Sunderbans, the last surviving haunt of the Bengal tiger (though I never saw one).

HA And from there?

TH I spent some time in India and Thailand then was offered a job in Singapore working for an oil supplies company. It was a terrific job. I travelled to outposts to which you would normally never go, in Indonesia, Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak, the Philippines, Brunei. I loved the job but after two years they wanted to relocate me to Saudi Arabia. After three weeks I decided life was too short to spend there so I quit. Then I came to Hong Kong and have been here ever since.

HA When did you start writing?

TH I spent a lot of time in China in the days when everything closed down at 9 o'clock. The hotels didn't have TVs and you weren't allowed to bring in western newspapers so with time on my hands I wrote a short story. I entered it in the annual competition run by the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong's English language newspaper and to my surprise, it won first prize. I won again the following year but I was very busy in those days, I had started my own business and was travelling very extensively so writing was not a priority.

HA Where did you travel?

TH I must have been to China 100 times. But also throughout south-east Asia, Korea, Japan, Australia and the Pacific Islands. I had developed a passion for diving so together with my wife, Glenda we dived on the Great Barrier Reef, in Palau and Truk, Tahiti and Bora Bora, in the Philippines and many other places. I have dived many times with sharks. Glenda is Singaporean so we spent a good deal of time there and in Malaysia. We also spent time in Africa, particularly South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as east Africa.

HA Tell us about your writing.

TH I have published three novels about a Manchester detective, Tom Collins, (I was born in Wigan, part of Greater Manchester) and there are several more in the works. I have also published a novel set in Hong Kong in the 1980s called *Hong Kong in the Night* as well as the first of a planned quartet of spy novels set at the end of the Cold War, and a book of short stories set in the far east and Africa.



HA Where did *The Book of Piles* come from?

TH Everyone assumes that it's because I suffer from them but in fact, the idea came from the English playwright Simon Grey. One day I picked up an edition of Granta which featured excerpts from Simon Grey's diaries. In one he tells a very funny story about Gary Cooper trying to shoot the movie High Noon while suffering dreadfully with his piles. I thought it was very funny – I repeat the story in the book. Simon Grey goes on to say that he thought there was a 'very important book to be written' about piles. I'm afraid mine isn't terribly important but it is very funny if I say so myself. And with all the misery of Covid around us, I thought it would be good to produce something to put a smile on people's faces.

HA So has Covid had any effect on your writing?

TH. Yes, in that it's prevented me from travelling. I have a planned quartet called *The Laughter of the Gods*. It's set at the end of the Cold War and the tagline is 'When the Cold War ended and the Berlin Wall fell, what happened to all the spies?' I have published the first book in the series *A Streak of Chivalry*. However a substantial part of the second novel called 'On Afghanistan's Plains' is set in Berlin, a city I have never visited. It's essential to go there to establish an authentic atmosphere but it's been impossible and so the sequel has now been on hold for two years.

HA Well let's hope for all of us that Covid will soon be under control and we can all return to our normal lives.

TH Amen to that.

HA Thank you for your time and we wish you lots of success with your future writing. So where can we buy your books?

TH They're all available in paperback or as an e-book from Amazon worldwide. Or if you live in Hong Kong and would like a signed copy you can get one directly from me. Just send name and contact details to my website: trevorhughes-writer.com, or to info@happy-ali.com. And thank you for featuring me in *Happy Ali*.

To buy the book:

In the UK <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B09PHG8LRD>

In the USA <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09PHG8LRD>





Fame at last! 😊

Nice interview, Trevor. You come across as quite human!!

[Reply](#)



Pam

Seriously, though, you are very much to be commended for your persistence in getting published. You've written in a variety of genres and have the ability to create mystery and suspense, fascinating characters and, of course, humour. Your books are well worth reading and it's good to hear you have several more in the pipeline. Well done.

[Reply](#)



GLENYS NELLIST

I might be slightly biased, since I'm your little sister, but your writing is seriously brilliant (and funny.) Proud of you, Trevor.

[Reply](#)



David Nellist

Love the book of piles Trevor and can't wait for the sequel to your cold war novel!

[Reply](#)



mark Pinkstone

Well done Trevor. You have a colourful career, enough for an autobiography. Cheers.

[Reply](#)



Tessa

Love the interview (and the books!)

[Reply](#)



Roger

Reading your interview, you've led the perfect life to have great material for your many books which are massively entertaining and packed with humour. And let's be honest, your trip to Berlin is just an excuse to eat Bratwurst and drink frothy pints whilst listening to German folk music and prancing about in Lederhosen... can I come?

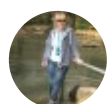
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Angela

I love your writing, very proud of you Trevor x

[Reply](#)



Pauline Smith

What a great interview Trevor. Would love to hear more about your very extensive travels. I'm sure there are plenty of stories to tell. I really enjoyed the Tom Collins novels and also Hong Kong in the Night. The Book of Piles is sitting on my bedside cabinet waiting to be read and from the reviews I know it's going to be hilarious. Keep writing, you're so very talented.

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Sandra Vandenbrink

I know Glenys is a fantastic writer. Did not know there was another writer in the family. I'll have to check this out.

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