

Ewart Rouse

Author of *Sticky Wicket*



In this issue's Cultural Showcase, we are pleased to feature Mr. Ewart Rouse, author of "Sticky Wicket" – literary works on Cricket.

Widely regarded as the Sport of the Caribbean, Cricket is an integral aspect of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and has greatly impacted our recreation, our family life and our colloquial language.

A national of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Rouse is a former editor at the Philadelphia Inquirer. He previously reported for the Trinidad Guardian and The Associated Press and taught journalism at Temple, Rutgers, Arcadia and Rowan Universities.

The following is an interview with Mr. Rouse, conducted by Kyle Lequay, Communications Assistant.

Can you start by telling me who is Ewart Rouse?

I am a Trinidad-born journalist and educator. I reported for the Trinidad Guardian, the Associated Press and was a reporter and editor at the Philadelphia Inquirer. I taught journalism and public relations at Temple, Rutgers, Arcadia and Rowan universities.

Can you tell us about your Sticky Wicket trilogy?

The series take a very light-hearted look at immigrants who grew up on cricket in their native countries and who want to continue playing the game of their youth in the suburbs of American cities. They run into opposition from soccer moms and baseball groups who resent the idea of foreigners taking over their fields to play a game that lasts the whole day. The local groups have the numerical

strength – and the political clout – to get them booted off "their" fields. But the main character, Freddie Watkins, a Trinidad native and a club manager, isn't about to let that happen.

In *Sticky Wicket*, Vol. 1, *Watkins At Bat*, Watkins comes out of retirement to play for his team, Fernwood Cricket Club, in a grudge match against the hotshot Jamaica Rebels Cricket Club. The game, in suburban Fernwood, is interrupted when the head of the local Little League shows up with scores of Little Leaguers demanding the cricketers get off the field so the youngsters can play. That sets the stage for the rest of the series.

Sticky Wicket, Vol. 2, *Watkins Fights Back*, is about Watkins' taking on the establishment almost single-handedly.

In *Sticky Wicket*, Vol. 3, *Watkins' Finest Inning*, matters come to a head in a win-or-lose final confrontation with the establishment.

While fighting to save his cricket club, Watkins has his own battle on the home front. His wife, Gina, who is African-American and who, not having grown up with the sport doesn't understand the importance of the game to a grown man, has given her husband an ultimatum: Either he quit his cricketing life for good and accompany her to church on Sundays, or their marriage is over.

As she tells him in the opening chapter in Volume 1; "You have to decide, Fred. Do you love cricket more than you love the Lord and your family?"

Watkins loves his wife, but he also loves cricket. Something has to give. Or can there be a compromise?

It's a serious topic, but I take a humorous, almost over-the-top approach

to it, with off-beat characters of West Indian, Indian, Pakistani and English descent.

Where did the inspiration come from?

I have been involved in cricket in the United States since I arrived here, as a player, then as manager of a cricket club. Many of the characters and situations are drawn from real life. It is as said that a writer should write what he or she knows, and it all came very naturally to me.

What message would you like this book to send to your readers?

Say the word "cricket" and watch the eyes of the typical American fog up. He thinks of it as long, boring games with impossible to understand rules. As a journalist accustomed to writing "layman's language" that everyone understands, I set out to make sure readers of all stripes understand the game.

But while they have a cricket theme, the novels are not sports books. The story is the story of every immigrant group. As the so-called new kid on the block, each group faces obstacles as it seeks hold on to aspects of its culture and to gain acceptance by the larger community.

Now that you have published this series, what's next for Ewart Rouse?

I working simultaneously on three other novels. One is a political thriller set in Trinidad; the other two are mainstream fiction set in a newsroom in pre-casino Atlantic City.