



Conversations with Jon Hassler

Joseph Plut

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Jon Hassler developed a large following in the course of his writing career, which extended from the publication of his first novel, *Staggerford*, in 1977, when he was in his mid-forties, until his death in 2008. Hassler cultivated the landscapes and communities of small towns in the Upper Midwest, basing his characters on his own experiences in Park

Rapids, Plainview, Brainerd, and other Minnesota locales. The stories, which often reflect Hassler's background as a Roman Catholic and a teacher in one way or another, are laced with quiet humor and naturalistic dialogue. As a reviewer for the *New York Times* once famously put it, Hassler is "a writer good enough to restore your faith in fiction."

In the years preceding his death Jon's long-time friend Joe Plut interviewed him extensively about the origins, publication history, and themes associated with each of his nine popular novels; they discussed his agents and editors, his movie and TV deals and theatrical spin-offs. These interviews, many of which have never before appeared in print, are gathered here within the pages of a single volume and graced with a cover painting by Jon himself. Plut draws upon postcards, Jon's journal entries, published reviews, and experiences the two shared while teaching and traveling together, in his efforts to stir Jon to reminisce about his career as a novelist. The result is a series of casual conversations offering food for thought to anyone interested in how a novelist handles his material, and even greater stimulation to fans who cherish *North of Hope*, *The Love Hunter*, *Staggerford*, or *Simon's Night* among their favorite works of fiction.



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