

An Interview With William Gensburger and JC Ryan, co-authors of *The Path of Duty and Honor: If George Washington Returned*

by Eric Stillwell



Two authors, a world apart, Gensburger and Ryan, have known each other for a decade, communicating via Zoom on various aspects of both author's novels. This is their first joint novel. The novel itself has received strong, positive reviews and blends historical accuracy about George Washington with a solid storyline about how he would approach corruption in

today's world, an author in the book's controversial biography of George Washington, and the start of a relationship.

1. What attracted you to this novel idea?

JCR: The core concept originated from William's friend Dan Ashley, an award-winning ABC7 news anchor, during a lunch in 2010. The idea was simple yet powerful: what would happen if George Washington showed up to straighten out the country?

WG: This premise resonated deeply with me because it addresses the founding principles of America and how far America has drifted from them.

JCR: The opportunity to collaborate with William on bringing Washington back during such a politically divided time felt like both a literary challenge and a patriotic calling.

2. How much research went into the historical elements of George Washington?

JCR: The novel required extensive historical accuracy to make George Washington's character authentic and believable. All locations and historical information about George Washington in this novel are accurate.

WG: We researched Washington's actual mannerisms, speech patterns, military experiences, his time at Mount Vernon, his views on slavery, his relationships with other founders like Hamilton and Lafayette, and his writings, including his Farewell Address.

JCR: The goal was to create a Washington who could seamlessly discuss both his historical context and react credibly to modern America—from smartphones to social media to contemporary politics.

3. What do you feel the strength of this novel is?

WG: The novel's greatest strength lies in how it holds up a mirror to contemporary America through the eyes of someone who helped create the republic. By having Washington confront modern issues—political corruption, partisan gridlock, the American Restoration Act, even homelessness and Las Vegas casinos—we force readers to examine whether we've honored or betrayed the founding vision.

JCR: The book doesn't just entertain; it ignites conversations about civic duty, virtue in public service, and what "We the People" truly means. Early readers have said things like "George's words brought tears to my eyes" and "it reminded me that it is up to We the People to ensure that our republic lives on".

WG: I also feel that one of the strengths is that we have made this book non-partisan. At no time do the characters assert their party affiliation. We even added a female president. The theme is about duty and honor to the core foundation. It should remind us just how special the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are.

JCR: It is also a terrific romance included amidst the challenges. Author Nathan Scott, a Washington buff, and his rebellious teen son, get to experience the real-life Washington.

4. How do you feel it fits the timing of the 250th year since the Declaration of Independence?

JCR: The timing couldn't be more perfect—or more urgent. As William noted in the foreword, this year, 2026, marks the 250th anniversary of the country's founding. And in many ways, a fitting time for George Washington to return, to remind us that our country was intended to be beyond partisan politics.

WG: At a moment when America is politically divided to such an extent that one has to wonder whether another Civil War is possible, Washington's return serves as both a warning and a call to action. The 250th anniversary should be a time of reflection, not just celebration, and this novel provides that opportunity.

5. What other book would you say this one is comparable to?

JCR: This is a unique blend that's difficult to compare directly, but think of it as meeting somewhere between "The Plot Against America" by Philip Roth (alternate history with political implications) and "Lincoln in the Bardo" by George Saunders (historical figures in unexpected contexts). Like Brad Meltzer's political thrillers, it combines historical detail with contemporary political intrigue. The book also shares DNA with Frank Capra's "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"—that same idealistic confrontation with a corrupted system.

WG: Ultimately, this book is its own creature: a political thriller wrapped in historical fiction with a dash of the miraculous. And a good romance is included.

6. Anything else that you want to add?

WG: Yes—America desperately needs this conversation. We've become a nation "*where few men have the virtue to withstand the highest bidder*," exactly as Washington warned. This book isn't just entertainment; it's a reminder that the republic was designed to be self-correcting, but only if citizens care enough to participate.

JCR: Washington himself says in the novel: "The republic is not broken in the way a machine breaks. It erodes. Slowly. Through the accumulated habits of citizens who stop believing their participation matters". If this book makes even one reader reconsider their civic responsibility, we've succeeded. And yes, America is in deep trouble unless we reconnect with these founding principles—reading this book is a good start.

7. Are you planning future books together, or even a sequel to this one?

WG: We are already underway with our next book, a thriller that should excite readers of both JC and me. It's titled 'The Quantum Keys,' and involves a multinational family involved in intelligence operations who discover the world's most dangerous device, one that can unlock the security of any machine, anywhere, while remaining invisible. Needless to say, everyone wants to kill them for it. Watch for that later this year.

JCR: As far as a sequel to our current novel, many readers have been asking for one already. While neither of us is opposed to the idea, we feel it has to be able to stand equal to or superior to this book in order to be considered. We'll let you know if that happens.

The Path of Duty and Honor: If George Washington Returned... is available in paperback, hardcover, deluxe hardcover (dust jacket), eBook, and audiobook. Learn more at www.President1.com.