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ZJ CZUPOR'S MYSTERY MINUTE: ON TOUR WITH DEAD WRITERS

ANSWER: Elmore Leonard (1925-2013) has been called the “Dickens of Detroit.” Leonard was born in New Orleans in 1925. Because his father worked as a site locator for General Motors the family moved frequently before settling in Detroit. After he graduated from the University of Detroit Jesuit High School, the U.S. Marines rejected him due to weak eyesight. Instead, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he served with the Seabees in the South Pacific. He graduated from the University of Detroit.



Elmore Leonard photo taken Sept. 17, 2012 at Leonard's Bloomfield Township, Michigan home. Courtesy The Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

As a student, he often entered short story contests and submitted to magazines. In 1949, a year before graduation, Leonard took a job as a copy writer for Campbell-Ewald Advertising Agency in Detroit, where he wrote ads for Chevrolet trucks even though he drove a Fiat.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Leonard mostly wrote westerns. He rose at 5:00 a.m. and wrote for two hours before he went to work. “During the 50s,” he said, “I wrote five books and 30 short stories in the dawn.”

His first crime novel, *The Big Bounce* (1969), was finally published by Gold Medal Books after it had been rejected eighty-four times. In the early 1970s, he admitted to an addiction to alcohol, which he blamed on the breakup of his nearly thirty-year marriage. He joined Alcoholics Anonymous and quit drinking.

He married three times and had five children, all from his first marriage to Beverly Cline in 1949. He was survived by his third wife, Christine, whom he married in 1993. He had twelve grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

At the time of his death, his novels had sold tens of millions of copies. More than two dozen of his novels and stories were adapted for film or television—some more than once.

In addition to his 1983 Edgar Award, Mystery Writers of America gave him the Grand Master Award for Lifetime Achievement (1992). He was also presented with the 2008 F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Award, and the 2012 National Book Award for “outstanding achievement in fiction writing.”