



Write What Inspires You! Author Interviews

By

Donna M. McDine ©2008

Children's Author

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"Writing lets me soar into depths of my soul that I never knew existed"

~Donna M. McDine

Donna M. McDine

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DEDICATION

This being my first e-book I would like to thank two very special people who have made my writing journey possible with their continued support and encouragement ~ Suzanne Lieurance and Lea Schizas. Ladies, I consider you both my mentors ~ Thank you!

Donna M. McDine



FOREWORD

Since embarking on my writing career a little over two years ago, I have had the privilege of meeting and interviewing numerous published authors. I published this e-book to share their words of wisdom and insight with the newbie and seasoned writers who continue to seek the golden star of publication. I hope you enjoy reading their interviews as much as I have. Happy reading and here's to your inspiration!

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Darrell Bain

(November 2007)



I am happy to have Darrell Bain as my guest author today, through Pump Up Your Book Promotion. He shares with us his synopsis of his latest book, *Savage Survival*:

SAVAGE SURVIVAL is not just another testosterone driven science fiction novel. At the basic level, it explores the personalities and attitudes of men, women and children when stripped of the comforting insulation of organized society. Invulnerable aliens have captured millions of humans and are subjecting them to the most brutal and horrible environments ever encountered, in essence a survival test of a magnitude heretofore undreamed of.

Lyda Brightner is an eleven year old girl when she is suddenly and without warning separated from her parents and thrown into the midst of undisciplined humans in a harsh desert environment. Food and water and clothing are fought over. Those who control it can do as they wish—and their wishes are terrible.

Lyda is weaponless and alone, like almost everyone. Raped at eleven. Forced to kill. Grieving for her parents. All that stands between Lyda and death is her own innate bravery, her quick mind, her unwavering integrity and ultimately, her belief that someday she will find someone to love.

Lyda's strength of character and fighting spirit make her a leader, even at a very young age. Over the next six years she must constantly fight the ever changing and ever more dangerous environments the aliens subject them to. But she must fight other humans as well, those who have survived by brute strength and ruthless plundering of the weak.

But even if she lives through all this, Lyda must still face the final question: What do the aliens have in mind for the few hundred remaining humans, those few left of all the millions who died?

SAVAGE SURVIVAL is a coming of age novel like no other and Lyda Brightner is a character you'll never forget.

Visit Darrell Bain at: <http://www.darrellbain.com>

Debra Beck

(November 2007)



I am excited to announce my guest author for today!

Welcome to Debra Beck, author of "My Feet Aren't Ugly ~ A Girl's Guide to Loving Herself from the Inside Out"

Girls Standing in Their Power

"I don't care what others think of me, I want to make decisions for myself, based on how I feel, not based on what someone else thinks." This is a statement from a teenage girl standing in her power

I was a very insecure teenager. I was one big ball of anxiety, everyday during the school year, and it only diminished slightly when school was out. I was always looking outside of myself for approval and because I rarely received it, I felt like something was desperately wrong with me.

It wasn't until I had two daughters of my own, did I realize that this wasn't exclusive to me; it was a universal issue among teenage girls.

My passion is helping girls learn to fill that big hole in themselves that makes them feel so worthless. When we have a big hole in us that we have not filled with our own love and confidence, we are always looking outside of ourselves to get it filled. All of our decisions are based on getting someone to like us, instead of making decisions that are good for us. If we have confidence in ourselves it's easy for us to say no to the things that aren't good for us.

An example of this could be as simple as: a couple of kids in school ask you to ditch school, and go party. Inside you don't really want to do this, but you do because you don't want them to dislike you. If you felt good about yourself it would be easy to say, "no thanks, but have fun." When we are confident, we come from a different place inside ourselves, we carry ourselves differently. People have respect for us and don't question the decisions we make for ourselves.

I love it when I see these shifts in girls, and they love it too. When young women start filling that hole with satisfaction and confidence in themselves, their whole life changes. They are no longer making decisions for the wrong reasons; the decisions they make are decisions that are good for them. I get to watch their appearance actually change too. They stand straighter, they walk with a sense of sureness, and they speak with confidence, because they are. There is nothing more inspiring to me than a girl learning how to stand in her power or a girl standing strong in her power. I feel so lucky in my life to be able to witness these miraculous changes in girls who start loving themselves. It reminds me how big love is.

For 15 years, Debra Beck has mentored teenage girls, doing workshops with Girl Power, as well as creating and facilitating Spirited Youth. She drew upon her own life experiences for her book, *My Feet Aren't Ugly*, which is an Award-Winner in the Young Adult Non-Fiction category of the National Best Books 2007 Awards. Learn more at <http://www.myfeetarentugly.com/>

Don't forget to check out my book review of Debra's book at:
<http://reviewarchives.tripod.com/id62.html>

Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein

(April 2008)



I'm thrilled to have guest author, Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein with me today.

Take a moment to read her guest post as to what inspires her to write. I am sure you will be as enchanted with her post as I am.

Be sure to stop back on Monday, April 21st...when I post my book review of "The Truth (I'm a girl, I'm smart and I know everything)".

"Why am I having more trouble with this assignment than most? Is it because I don't usually put into words what inspires me to write? Or is it that I somehow consider private and none of your business what inspires me to write? The product should be enough! And you want to know what goes on behind the scenes also? In my head? In my gut? In the semi-conscious pool of diffuse thoughts and emotions? Oh, alright, I'll be particularly good-natured and try to share some of it.

Sometimes what inspires me to write is a surge of emotion that left without an outlet might get nasty. For example, when I was in college I was thinking a lot about my aunt who died of cancer when I was thirteen. I never really resolved my feelings of loss. So I wrote a story about her. And it helped. The story is now upstairs in my filing cabinet. I'm not sure who ever read it besides me and perhaps my roommates. But it did seem to help to write it.

Sometimes what inspires me to write is humor, or the irony of a situation. I am related to Miressa Berenson, the actress. We are about the same age.

When I was about 35 I saw her in a movie and admired her grace and beauty. In fact, I was so mesmerized I almost expected to look like her in the mirror after the movie. Of course I didn't. But I wrote a very funny short story titled, "Am I my Cousin's Cousin?" In other words, I admired her and would have loved to know her personally. On the other hand, to Miressa I didn't exist. So were we cousins? Writing the story made me somebody! Actually, I sent that story into a few magazines. It was not accepted. It lives in the top little drawer in my dining room now.

Sometimes I write because I have a message that must be conveyed. In fact, that is why I write most of the time now. Ever since I discovered what I call The Enchanted Self inside of women (The Enchanted Self is a capacity for happiness far greater than appreciated or understood by the women herself, or society at large) I have been on a mission. For over 15 years I have lived, breathed and shared The Enchanted Self and have never stopped. My first book appeared 11 years ago, *The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy*. That book is the first book in Positive Psychology, specifically for women. Also it is a pathfinder book in that it teaches both therapists and clients how to reframe their perceptions of themselves and their personal histories, resulting in focusing on what is right about ourselves rather than what is wrong. Oh, I can just go on and on. But instead I will say that the amount of inspiration behind this book was gigantic. The amount of effort to write the book was also gigantic. And it had to happen. The push was firm and unrelenting. Was it from me, or the great Divine or both? I'd say and believe both. If it were just from me there were many times I think I would have given up. But the push would be there-every day-through good and bad times.

And so, as I said, I'm not going to share all. Let me just finish by saying that the push behind my latest book, which believe it or not, is also about The Enchanted Self in each of us, is just as strong a push. Not only is the 'girl' in the book determined to come to life, but she has already made clear that I'm going to help her grow up through a series of books, of which *The Truth, (I'm a girl, I'm smart and I know everything)* is but the first. How is this book still about The Enchanted Self? It's simple. The 'girl' is struggling with holding on to parts of herself that will allow her to stay true to herself. She finds a way. I hope you will read the book and you'll see how clever her

solution is. Anyway, that is what we must all do-find a way to stay true to ourselves. And if we do, we access The Enchanted Self inside of ourselves again and again. And we are happy and we thrive. And that is good!

I'll finish by saying that writing most of my life has paid off. My emotions are healthier and my writings no longer just sit in file cabinets. I have many books to my credit and they are read. And the web has provided a way to reach people around the world. Just last night I discovered that a professor gave a talk titled: ["Almost a Religion": Oprah Winfrey, Media Mind Cure and the Enchanted Self](#) I don't have access to the paper yet, but to see my concept travel around the globe and be included in a title with Oprah Winfrey-well it is wonderful and amazing. So listen to your inner voice and feel the push and keep writing. You never know where it will take you or who you will be sharing a title with!"

Thomas Wade Bounds

(March 2008)



What inspires you to write?

My kids inspire me to write. They are so incredible, with tremendous talent, smiles, laughter and wonder within their mind that is still in the developmental stages. They are so happy, loving, kind and so curious with questions of innocents one moment and then the next they can be so bold and ready to conquer each other and attempt to topple us.

We parents hold the love to guide, to discipline and to know when to let go. What comes to my mind is how to put this to rest or ask the question without worry of having I done enough? What can I do to help resolve the explosion of the moment? What if the explosion of the moment is too big for them to handle and we are not there?

What does it take to calm them and prepare them for that instant? Will they be safe and out of harms way? When do they understand the lesson from the path of which they have just traveled? Or do they get a second chance? They seem to know everything, but then ask why? Why should I do that? They ask why because their minds are still developing and gaining information for them to act on and not react to. How to make a choice right or wrong or even how to understand what is right or wrong.

Today Hollywood and the media have made life seem so unreal; you can make choices and then there are no real consequences from them. Kids accept that, then do not relate to or understand how to identify what the real right choice should be.

Only a parent holds the answers to what they want their child to do, and we must depend upon God's Wisdom and Guidance to get that right.

To help a mind grow and achieve is wonderful and beautiful. To me watching kids learn something that was once a challenge is more than exciting; it is the impact of love you have for your child and the love your child is learning to have for you, with respect and understanding.

To give a gift of reason and wisdom is a gift that gives back trust. That leads to building a strong parent/child relationship through the years when they may have a tendency to rebel.

I was once told by a minister that he wrote down all of the mistakes that he made during his teen years and then gave it to his child and said, "These are my mistakes, read them learn them, now go make your own." Passing knowledge on to our kids is giving them the power of an experience that can stand strong against peer pressure and other interferences. When they are preparing for a test, do they just show up and take it, and then hope for the best?

Well, kids today have tests everyday and we should stand up and prepare them for the tests of life. We never know when our kids or even other kids that we do not even know will put our kids in positions that can have serious consequences and life threatening or even fatal situations. I believe that as a parent I need to arm my kids with an experience that they can turn to and relate to when in tight spots. They will not be able to turn and ask for guidance from us when these situations are occurring, even cell phones—though good lines of communication between kids and parents—do not always work in these troubled times. Developing your kids to come up with solutions and to have wisdom of today's issues is the best preparation for tomorrow's troubles.

My son asked me, "Dad, why do you write these books?" Well, we then sat down to read them. He turned to me and said, "Now I know why." He said to me, "Thanks Dad." We have had many conversations about issues that would normally not come up.

My daughter has read the other series that I am working on that is for the younger child and parent. She has grown so much and asks questions that are truly eye opening to me. Again conversations that are wonderful and graceful allow the child and parent to connect and both can develop kindness, patience, honor, and trust with each other that builds wisdom for kids they otherwise would not have. Together a family becomes open with each other in more ways than by just saying I love you. You will be amazed at the conversations that you can have through questions that our kids long to ask.

I write to inspire my kids; to fill them with more than love; to give them solid thinking power; to open their minds to questions that can only be answered with wisdom by loving parents and power to help them find the messages that God intends for them to find and hold with understanding; to equip them, so when in trouble they are in a position to act, not react. This I pray will help others as well.

I thank God for the wisdom He teaches and provides for us to learn and pass on.

Visit Thomas Wade Bounds at:

<http://www.authorsden.com/wwwthomaswadebounds>

Holly Fretwell

(December 2007)



Hello All...I'm excited to have Holly Fretwell with me today as guest author. She shares with us:

Kids are the greatest. To hear them laugh and see them play is heart-lifting. To listen to them and learn from them is a joy of life. And to teach them is invigorating but it can be a challenge. I have two kids of my own that I read to every night. It is a magical time where we adventure into strange and foreign lands. It is one of the ways that we share ideas with each other and a time, that as a parent, I impart life lessons in ways that may otherwise come off sounding preachy and static - not to mention boring.

To share some of these lessons I have written a book of my own. Writing a book for kids, however, is not the easiest task, especially my chosen topic; a non-fiction book discussing science and economics for 8-12 year olds. When writing "The Sky's NOT Falling: Why It's OK to Chill about Global Warming," I had to focus on making complex concepts simple to understand for kids at different comprehension levels.

Since a kids' book in particular needs to be lively and engaging I tried to weave in some basic science and economic concepts without stopping the more entertaining narrative. I knew I needed to keep it simple while at the same time giving a fair explanation of sometimes technical concepts. I also wanted to bring light to some of the misconceptions that many kids have about global warming. After lots of help from friends and family I found

what worked best was keeping the sentences short and snappy, the words uncomplicated, and the information unambiguous. I knew what it was I wanted to communicate, but I had to let go of the flourishes. Kids can't be expected to understand, much less interpret, the phrases and clichés that adults use without a second thought.

I found that asking my kids and their friends to give me feedback as the chapters progressed was immensely helpful (and they let me know what they did and did not like)! Their feedback helped me refine my explanations and descriptions and gave me confidence that the manuscript I turned in was, to use that famous expression, "kid-tested and mother-approved."

Writing "The Sky's Not Falling: Why It's OK to Chill About Global Warming" was an incredible experience. It improved my writing skills by forcing me to be ever more precise, and gave me the opportunity to share the ups and occasional downs of the project with my sons helping them understand just what I do for a living as an instructor and researcher of natural resource policy and economics. In addition, if what I know can help kids relax about the natural changes in the world around them while teaching them to think critically and inspiring them to work towards the cleaner environment every community needs, then I consider the time I spent writing "Sky" to be time well spent.

Holly Fretwell is a natural resources policy expert, an adjunct professor at Montana State University, and is a research fellow at the Property and Environment Research Center. You can visit her publisher's website at <http://www.worldahead.com/titles/sky.php>.

DYAN GARRIS

(November 2007)



Hello all...I'm thrilled to have Dyan Garris, author of "Voice of the Angels Cookbook ~ Talk to Your Food! ~ Intuitive Cooking," as my guest author today.

We've all heard of and perhaps have experienced that mysterious, frustrating, and inexplicable phenomenon of writer's block. What is this exactly and how do we get beyond it?

All writing takes place first in the higher dimensions of the heart, soul, and mind of the author and then gets translated to the two dimensional piece of paper. So when one is experiencing writer's block, whether you are fully aware of it or not, it means that somewhere along those points of energy, or energy meridians, exists energy blockage.

One of the keys to unlocking the doors to creativity lies in the ability to clear and rebalance the energy field and/or chakras. When the energy field is balanced, one discovers with joy that the hinge on the door of the creative mind once again swings open as easily as a newly oiled gate.

The first step in clearing the field is as simple as identifying what is really bothering you or affecting you on a very physical level. We start with this because this is the energy that resides in the first or root chakra. Issues and challenges regarding money, time, family, and relationships can have quite a negative effect upon creative flow.

The second chakra is the seat of creativity. If we are writing and creating something that we have no audience for or have challenges in bringing to market, then we may find the creative flow being stifled or stanchued. It is akin to being in a constant state of pregnancy and never giving birth.

The third chakra is the resting place of the soul. If you aren't able to express, communicate, and impart what is in your very core, you will perhaps experience a wedge of stagnation and frustration.

Most writers write from the heart, from their imaginations and upper chakras. When experiencing writer's block it isn't that the heart and mind are closed. It's that the flow to these is temporarily blocked. If the flow is blocked by the static energy being generated from the lower chakras, nothing brilliant or inspirational can get through or get translated to paper. It's similar to a clogged pipe. It is necessary to eliminate the obstruction in the system.

Clearing the energy field and balancing the chakras is not a difficult task if one understands that one must start at the base and work up from there. I used to teach a class on how to do it, and then in 2005 I developed a music and meditation series for vibrational attunement of mind, body and soul. This does the all the work for you and one doesn't consciously have to do anything at all except listen to very soothing music. I designed it to clear the chakras and balance the entire system. Among other things, I had it independently tested by National Health & Wellness, where it earned their Stamp of Approval.

I also incorporated this vibrational attunement work into my new cookbook, *Voice of the Angels - Talk To Your Food! Intuitive Cooking*. Cooking and preparing food is a basic root chakra function; however the creative procedure of doing so is an upper chakra operation. When you tie those together, you're opening and balancing all of your chakras easily and effortlessly.

One of the most important goals of my body of work is to make chakra balancing and energy clearing into a completely natural and enjoyable process. In learning to do this we can become our best selves and our whole selves. Let the creativity flow!

Dyan Garris publishes a free Daily Channeled Message on her website:
<http://www.voiceoftheangels.com/>

Dyan Garris

(March 2008)



Join me today along with Guest Author, Dyan Garris ~

You will walk away feeling inspired!

I've spent a lifetime helping people unblock what's in their way so they can move forward on the path. And in late 2005 I began building an entire CD series of music and meditation to help people do exactly that in an easy and enjoyable way. So when *The Secret* came out, I chuckled to myself, shrugged my shoulders and said, "This isn't a secret."

The power of positive thinking and the laws of attraction are valid truths that have been around for years. What *The Secret* did was get these truths into the lives of millions, setting the stage for real and necessary transformation. Because of that, positive thinking and the laws of attraction now resonate as truth in collective consciousness. It's a good start.

As important as that is, many have recently discovered that these are not enough to create what they really desire. *The Secret* has left many disillusioned and as unhappy as before they came in contact with it. There are missing pieces of the puzzle. So, as part of the next logical step to the building of a set of tools for people to use for real transformation, I wrote *Money and Manifesting*. It isn't just about manifesting money. It's definitely about money, but also about manifesting all of your desires.

Now I will let you in on a little secret. While positive thinking and the laws of attraction are part of the equation, we must learn to integrate them into our

daily lives. The positive thoughts must resonate as truth, not only in our minds but also in our root chakra, because that is where the power of creation lives. If you are blocked there in your base, you won't be able to create much of anything. And if you do manage to create something, you'll have trouble keeping it unless you heal and unblock whatever it is that is blocking you in your very core.

I can hear some of you asking, "What is a root chakra?" Because not everyone knows what that is, I've fictionalized parts of the book with characters that each have root chakra blocks. These are interesting people that everyone can relate with. There is a story here as well as information on what stands in your way and how exactly to create what you desire. If we can identify with something or someone, if we can see ourselves reflected, we have an opportunity for change and subsequent transformation.

What I'm really excited about is that simply by virtue of the way this is written you're engaging both your left brain and right brain, and you're already learning to integrate. When you get done reading you've already taken the first step toward manifesting. You will feel the shift immediately.

If you want to go way beyond *The Secret*, you need to learn how energy works and how it flows. You need to learn exactly how to unblock the energy of money and how to create something out of nothing. You need to learn how to not only clear your limiting belief systems but how to implement and integrate this learning. You need the real secrets.

Dyan Garris is the author of "Money and Manifesting," "Voice of the Angels - A Healing Journey Spiritual Cards," "The Book of Daily Channeled Messages," "Talk To Your Food! Intuitive Cooking," and "Fish Tale of Woe - Lost At Sea." She publishes a Daily Channeled Message at <http://www.voiceoftheangels.com/>

In 2005 she created a series of music and meditation CDs for healing, Automatic Chakra Balance,[™] help in sleeping, relaxation, and vibrational attunement of mind, body, and spirit.

K. L. Going

(March 2008)



I recently had the privilege of conducting an email interview with K.L. Going. She is an award-winning author and lives in Glen Sprey, New York, where she writes full-time for children of all ages. She is the author of *The Garden of Eve*, *Saint Iggy*, an ILA Best Book for Young Adults; *Fat Kid Rules the World*, a Michael L. Printz Honor Book; and *The Liberation of Gabriel King*, her first book for middle-graders and a *Children's Book Sense Pick*. Prior to becoming a successful writer, Ms. Going worked as a literary agent. With her experience on both sides of the fence in the publishing industry she is a wealth of knowledge. Visit her at: <http://www.klgoing.com>.

DMc: Do you have any children? If yes, how do they feel about having a mom as an author?

KL: I have a ten year old step-daughter who is awesome. Most of the time she doesn't seem to notice one way or another that I'm an author, but the one time she got excited was when *The Liberation of Gabriel King* was one of the choices on her Scholastic Book Fair flier. That was cool for both of us!

DMc: What or whom inspires you to write?

KL: This is going to sound like a cliché answer, but I mean it... these days I am most inspired to write by the kids who send me fan mail. Their letters are so honest and poignant and wonderful that it makes me want to produce the best books for them that I possibly can.

DMc: What did you find to be the most exhilarating or frustrating process in getting your first novel published?

KL: The most exhilarating moment has got to be when I received the official offer from my editor. Up until that moment it's all hope, and then it becomes real.

The frustrating moments came later, after my first book, once there were expectations and deadlines for the next book, yet I was still working full-time at my old job and feeling completely overwhelmed.

DMc: Do you have an agent? If yes, what do you feel are two of the most important questions to ask when querying an agent?

KL: I have an agent I adore -- Ginger Knowlton of Curtis Brown, Ltd. I think two of the most important questions to ask when querying an agent are what kinds of books they love to read (regardless of what type of books they represent) and whether they will be committed to the one particular project they're taking on, or whether they'll be committed to you as an author. This is especially true if you write diverse material.

DMc: What advice would you give someone who wants to get a book published?

KL: If at first you don't succeed, try and try again. There are many, many people who want to get published. Many of those people have great ideas, but most will give up without ever writing their whole book. A percentage of those ideas will be turned into great books, but their authors will never take the time to properly edit them. An even smaller percentage of those polished, well edited books will be submitted but rejected by a publishing house and their authors will give up. You want to be in the final percentage -- the people who have a great idea, execute it well, follow through with editing, and don't give up if they meet with rejection.

DMc: Have you ever been asked to change the title of any of your novels?

KL: Yes. Almost all of them, actually! The Liberation of Gabriel King was originally called The Liberation of Harper McCormack, but the title was changed due to an early change of plot. The Garden of Eve was originally

called Eden. Again, the plot shifted during editing, but even before that the title was deemed too religious. And my newest teen novel's title is still up in the air even though we're almost done editing.

DMc: Which is your own favorite book or character?

KL: Okay. You're not supposed to choose because it's like choosing one of your children, right? But I'm actually going to answer this. My favorite book is *The Liberation of Gabriel King* because it is the book that most expresses my heart and it's the book I am most proud to share with children. There's a nostalgia to that book that affects me deeply, and I drew on such an important part of my own life to create it.

DMc: Are your characters based on yourself or anyone else you know?

KL: Usually it's a mix. Troy in *Fat Kid* was based on me and my own warped brain. Curt was based on Kurt Cobain --- kind of a tribute character. Gabe is also a bit of me... but Iggy, Evie, and Frita are all their own people.

DMc: What do you enjoy the most by conducting school visits?

KL: Getting to meet the kids who read my books and see their genuine enthusiasm. Younger kids especially are always so free with their excitement -- something adults often lack.

DMc: What would you be if you were not a writer?

KL: I would either be a literary agent or I'd work at a non-profit of some kind. Those are both jobs I was doing before I became a writer, and both suited me well. I still critique manuscripts in addition to writing simply because I loved that part of my job at the literary agency and I remember how hard it was when I was first getting started to get good feedback from knowledgeable sources. I always felt like publishing was such a mystery, so now I enjoy helping people figure out the puzzle.

Non-profit work is still important to me too, so I try to feature different organizations on the *Give It Away Now* page on my web site. (That's a Red

Hot Chili Pepper's reference in case you didn't catch it!) I also feature people who are doing great things in the world on my Very Cool Person of the Month page of the site. I recognize that a lot of what I can do now as a published author is raise awareness of great people and great causes. I hope you'll check them out at <http://www.klgoing.com/vcpotm.htm> and feel free to nominate a cool person!

Suzanne Lieurance



AN INTERVIEW WITH SUZANNE LIEURANCE (Published: Write What Inspires You! - May 2008)

Suzanne Lieurance is not only a successful full-time freelance children's writer, she coaches' students in the skills of writing for children. Suzanne's experience and wealth of knowledge is quite evident when you sit in on one of her numerous tele-classes. The electronic airwaves of the internet and telephone lines spark with her energetic and inspiring teachings. Her students are kept active in their writing through weekly assignments, critique sessions and tele-classes. Get ready to immerse yourself in learning more about Suzanne through her interview and visiting her websites. I'm sure you will be motivated to become the best writer you can be through Suzanne's expertise.

Donna McDine: What inspires you to write?

Suzanne Lieurance: Gosh. No one has ever asked me that question. I guess anything and everything inspires me to write because I just HAVE to write. I can't NOT write. And you never know what will turn up in my stories. Once I had chocolate raspberry coffee and cranberry orange muffins when I was visiting a friend. A little while later, I wrote a story that I sold to a coffee company to put on their coffee can labels and the main character was addicted to chocolate raspberry coffee and cranberry orange muffins. My friends say nothing is safe around me. Anything they say or do can turn up in one of my stories.

When my sons were little they inspired me to write, and that's how I started writing for children. They were always saying something or doing something that made for a cute story. One time I wrote a story with two brothers, but then I decided the story didn't really need two boys, so I cut out one of them. My younger son read the revised version of the story and said, "Gosh, Mom. You killed off your own son. Why'd you take me out of the story?"

DMc: When and why did you form Children's Writers' Coaching Club through your organization The National Writing for Children Center?

SL: I created the National Writing For Children Center about a year ago. I did this because I wanted to have a way for teachers, parents, authors, and illustrators to connect since they all play such vital roles in the literacy of children. At the NWFCC we offer weekly tips for parents and teachers, as well as author and illustrator interviews, book reviews, and other information about children's writing and publishing. Many of our tips encourage teachers to use trade books in the classroom. Our tips for parents often give them new ways to enjoy reading, writing, and speaking with their children.

I created the Children's Writers' Coaching Club because I noticed that many people who tried to write for children had no idea of the "tricks of the trade" so to speak. Often their manuscripts were rejected by publishers not because the writing or the story weren't good, but because some rule of thumb for children's writing was not followed. For example, the writer changed viewpoints throughout the story, or told the story completely in narrative, often from the viewpoint of an adult. I wanted a way for children's writers to learn these rules and practice them on a weekly basis, as well as get to network with other children's writers, and learn from a variety of children's writers who are already successfully published. We're able to offer all of these opportunities to members of the coaching club.

DMc: How do you balance your freelance writing career with your writers' coaching responsibilities?

SL: It's getting tougher and tougher because I seem to have more coaching clients and more coaching opportunities than ever before, which leaves me with less time for writing. But generally, I coach clients in the morning, then write for a few hours. At 2:00 central time every weekday afternoon, I host

an internet radio show about children's books called Book Bites for Kids. After the show is finished each day, I usually go back to writing for another hour or so. A couple of nights a week I facilitate tele-classes for writers.

DMc: Please describe your emotions when one of your students achieves their first publishing credit. Especially if it derives from an assignment from CWCC.

SL: When one of the coaching club members gets that first publishing credit I am elated, but not surprised. I can just tell when one of the club members is writing material that is good and very marketable. So it doesn't surprise me when they make that first sale - or any sale thereafter! As a coach and a writing instructor, it's my job to help writers learn to create material that sells. I love doing that!

DMc: Please describe your creative process. Do you work with an outline or is it a stream of writing directly from your thoughts (or in some writers' cases your sub-conscious mind while sleeping)?

SL: I write from an outline. In fact, usually I try to create a very detailed outline (with chapter titles and everything) for the book I'm working on. That way, once the outline is complete, it's much easier to write the book. I go back and fill in the outline. But there are always some fun surprises that pop up along the way.

I also spend a lot of time getting to know my characters before I start writing. That way, I know what a character would do or say when something unexpected comes up in the story.

DMc: How many hours do you devote to writing and how long does it take you to write a book?

SL: Since I'm a fulltime freelance writer and writing coach, I write or coach all day, 5 days a week (and sometimes on weekends).

Generally, I prefer to have a year to write a middle grade novel or nonfiction book. But I write short stories, test passages, Readers Theater scripts, and other materials much faster. I also do many story adaptations on assignment and I usually have a month or so to complete those.

DMc: What was the biggest obstacle for you to overcome with your first published book?

SL: Actually, I was asked to write my first book. It was a children's guide to Kansas City. I was the regional advisor for the Kansas chapter of the SCBWI at the time. The publisher called me and asked if I knew a writer who could write *Kidding Around Kansas City* for them. Of course I said, "Sure. Me!" But since I was also teaching fulltime then, plus going to graduate school, and I had two teenage sons at home, I asked Lisa Harkrader, who was my co-regional advisor, to coauthor the book. We had so much fun working on it together. Later, we got to do book signings and TV and radio interviews together. We had a blast!

However, I have had my share of rejections and I still get rejected. But I don't look at rejections as obstacles. I tend to think that every rejection takes me one step closer to an acceptance.

DMc: Please share with us your current writing project.

SL: Right now I'm finishing up another historical novel for Enslow Publishers' historical adventure series. This one is about a young boy who lived in the Japanese-American internment camps in World War II.

DMc: What is the best writing advice you've ever received?

SL: Two things - 1) get to know your characters really, really well before you start writing, and 2) read, read, read the kinds of things you want to write.

DMc: How do you spend your time when you are not writing or coaching?

SL: I love to read, read, read. I also love to cook, travel, and listen to music and go to movies. I love to combine ALL of those activities as much as possible. Go on vacation to some exotic locale, listen to music, see a movie or two, read a good book (on the beach, since most of the exotic vacation locales involve a beach, at least for me they do). Usually, I don't get to cook on vacation, but I do get to eat. Yum!

Visit the National Writing for Children Center at <http://www.writingforchildrencenter.com> and <http://www.suzannelieurance.com> to learn more about the Children's Writers' Coaching Club and Book Bites for Kids, Lieurance's talk show about children's books on blogtalkradio.com. Sign up for The Morning Nudge, free words of inspiration and motivation to help you get a little writing done every day at <http://www.workingwriterscoach.com>. Leave a comment at any of these sites and mention you read this interview and you will receive the link to this free audio -*Picture Book Roundup: A Look at Some Popular Picture Books and What Makes Them So Special*.

Lea Schizas



AN INTERVIEW WITH LEA SCHIZAS

(Published: The National Writing for Children Center - April 2008)

Lea Schizas is a multi-published author and award-winning editor of two Writer's Digest 101 Top Web Sites. Between her writing projects, editing services, mentoring (or as many of us whom have had the privilege of connecting with Lea our "mother-hen") writers', networking, etc., her vast array of projects would exhaust anyone looking in from the outside. That said, I am elated and honored to share with you the perceptive and captivating interview with Lea.

Donna McDine: What or whom inspires you to write?

Lea Schizas: I've joked on several interviews that I mistook my umbilical cord as a cool writing implement and that's how my writing career began. In all honesty, it was my dad's love for the penned word that set me on my path. As a young girl I remember hearing dad's speeches at weddings, meetings, get-togethers, and how he captivated the audience with his words.

Along with dad's talent, it was my collection of comic books that really moved me to write. I loved the cliff-hanging endings, pushing me to buy the next comic book to find out what was going to happen. And that is exactly how I set up each of my chapter endings, thanks to comic books.

DMc: Where do you work? What is your ideal writing environment?

LS: I've worked wherever I can get peace and quiet, alone time with my laptop. Right now I'm in a corner in my living room. The ideal writing environment would be my own office, where I can close the door to the

yapping of my five kids and friends, to have my own shelves in front of me with my stack of writing books instead of having them spread throughout the house. But, this is one lesson writers need to adapt to - writing whenever and wherever you can, regardless of your surroundings. So, I've adapted quite nicely.

DMc: How many hours do you devote to writing and how long does it take you to write a book?

LS: Donna, I am involved with many writing commitments so I work looonng hours on my laptop. My day usually starts at 6:30am and doesn't finish until midnight strikes. Now, I do clean, cook, and all the other motherly things so my time isn't spent leaning over my laptop constantly.

Each day I devote to moving my own writing and editing forward, and then give one or two other writing aspects (updating sites/blogs, preparing zines/newsletters/reviews) my devotion as well. This slows down the time to complete my own work but I can safely say that I can finish three books in a year.

DMc: What do you most enjoy about the creative process? Are your characters based on people in your life?

LS: I enjoy the freedom of no fear. What do I mean by that? I don't fear being locked up in a nuthouse for stepping into my characters shoes while penning their stories. I become a teen with visions of past murders; an alien who finds himself tried for treason; a girl who discovers she is a princess to this whole new world she never knew existed. Writing allows you an escape, along with your reader, to leave your own safe domain and live another person's life. This exhilaration can't be felt in another profession as it is felt by those who write.

My characters are not based per say on anyone in my life but each do possess characteristics of family members. By keeping it 'in the family' it's easier for me to flesh out their personalities, reactions and actions, to their fullest potential. And it doesn't matter if my characters are human or animals; characters need to 'feel' real.

DMc: Do your characters crowd your conscious and sub-conscious thoughts? If yes, does it become difficult to keep them quiet?

LS: In my previous answer, I wrote that I step into my character's shoes so my answer would be yes, they do crowd my conscious and sub-conscious thoughts. How can they not? Until their story is finished, they are my buddies, telling me where they want to go, what they want to do. Some who are in a series have started their own blog, and quite popular as a matter of fact. They've now jumped out of my head and communicating with readers. And this is what it's all about- leaving a memorable impression on your reader, connecting them to your characters.

DMc: Please provide us with a glimpse into your current project.

LS: I have one big project that needs thought to successfully pull it off.

It is my upcoming re-release, "Rock Kingdom" with Tiger Publications. It is the first in a series of books based within the land of Rock Kingdom. This is an unusual piece of work for me in the sense the villain is given as much attention as the main character, Alexandra Stone, a young teenager who discovers she is the princess to this whole new world her parents kept from her for a reason. The villain has a dilemma, and in each book not only will I offer glimpses into his past life to discover this 'dilemma' but also offer the panoramic portrait of Rock Kingdom, each book hosted in a different part within this world. So I am mapping out each book, each area holding a purpose and revealed secret to the 'villain', and introducing new citizens of Rock Kingdom along with the regular cast of characters in the whole series.

But this isn't the only book I'm fleshing out. I have eight books in the works right now and each one is given equal time for me to complete. Every book needs to stamp its mark into a reader so I try not to rush anything.

DMc: What do you find to be more challenging: editing other writers' manuscripts or developing your own?

LS: I don't have a hard time developing my ideas into penned words, nor the editing stage. I do have a hard time figuring out if I'm objective enough and deleted inconsequential passages to the fullest extend. That is why a

critique partner or an editor comes in handy. We need another pair of eyes to catch things we are too involved with to see.

I have absolutely no difficulty editing other manuscripts because I am totally objective to this work and can spot plot holes, passive writing, weak dialogue easier than its creator.

DMc: Do you maintain your numerous websites on your own? Or do you have assistance?

LS: I've been accused of being twins, possessing a magical wand, or totally nuts. I agree with their last sentiment. I have no assistance. I do them all as I wrote earlier, devoting/splitting my time each day to one or two projects besides my writing and editing. I always say determination and perseverance are two qualities a writer must possess in order for them to complete their projects. Passion has to be, however, within you, as well, and I do possess passion for the written word.

DMc: What do you do when you're not writing?

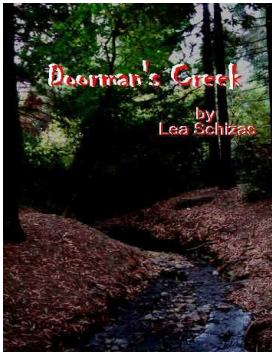
LS: Editing, reading...oh, you mean 'out of the writing sense'. Hmm...play with my three-year-old dog, Daisy. She's in one of my books, naturally. Go to the movies, visit Chapters for a good book (they must think I'm the owner with the amount of times I visit), garden, or sit outside and do absolutely nothing. Rare but it happens.

DMc: What has been the most memorable experience in your writing career?

LS: Besides being published, there are many memorable experiences in my career but two stand out for me. Kathe Gogolewski, a MuseItUp member and dear cyber friend, surprised me for the Muse's second year anniversary. She went behind my back and contacted several writers I know and they made a tribute to me, each writing a small thank you as to how I touched their writing life in her site, www.tri-studio.com It wasn't the tribute nor the thank yous that touched me than the fact they went to the trouble of doing something special for *me*. This meant the world to me.

The other total surprise was when I met with another Muser, Shelagh McNally, at a café here in Montreal and she presented me with a plant and a very special card that I treasure to this day. It was from all the writers in the first anthology project I set up, co-authored, edited and had published by Double Dragon Publishing, "The Muse On Writing"- <http://www.freewebs.com/themuseonwriting> These writers live all over the world but each one signed, wrote a special note to me, then sent it off to the next person to sign until it came to me. We're talking this card went around the world until it finally came into my possession. And I had no clue. Again, this gesture, I can't tell you what it meant and continues to mean to me.

My parents taught me that you never do something if you are expecting thanks. You do what you can for others within your means and time constraint. And that's what I do so whenever an email of thanks comes my way, or the above two gestures, these are my favorite toppings to add with my ice cream. They move me to pay it forward to the next writer.



Thank you, Donna, for the wonderful questions and opportunity to meet your readers.

Visit Lea Schizas at: <http://leaschizaseditor.tripod.com>

Donna's publishing credits include Stories for Children Magazine, Stories for Children Newsletter, Kid Magazine Writers, Long Story Short, Institute of Children's Literature Rx for Writers, SCBWI Metro NY Newsletter, and Once Upon A Time Magazine and a pending non-fiction article for Boys' Quest Magazine. She's also a children's book reviewer for Musing Our Children Group, The National Writing for Children Center, and Stories for Children.

Learn more about Donna at: <http://www.donnamcdine.com>, sign her guest book and receive a FREE copy of "Assaulting A Writer's Thinking," by Lea Schizas.

Beverly Stowe McClure



AN INTERVIEW WITH BEVERLY STOWE McCLURE
(Published: The National Writing for Children Center - May 2008)

Beverly Stowe McClure delighted me with a positive response to my email interview request. Beverly is a retired teacher and spends many of her days researching, writing and traveling. She has several published books and has quite a few more in the works. Her expert ability of submerging the reader from the onset brings you into the world of the characters seamlessly. She took the time out of her busy schedule to share her words of wisdom and a glimpse into her personal and writing worlds.

Donna McDine: Did you write while you were a teacher? Please share with us a memorable event while you taught.

Beverly Stowe McClure: I wrote a couple of magazine articles while I was still teaching. The first published article was about having fire drills in the home, based on a study of fire safety we did at school. I also turned one of the art projects my fifth-grade students did into "Fingerprints," an article that was published in *Humpty Dumpty*. I guess this is what's called "writing what you know."

One event that stands out in my mind occurred when the fifth-grade teachers were preparing our students to read *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry. Many of the children knew nothing about WWII so we had them research—talk to parents, grandparents, read about—the subject. Two of my girls went to the local nursing home and interviewed a man who had been in the war. They taped his story. They also talked to a woman who told them

what it was like having to ration sugar, gasoline coupons, and such. Then they played the tape for the class. It was awesome.

DMc: Where you an avid reader as a child? If yes, any particular author or series?

BSMc: Truthfully, I hated to read when I was a child, and I read only when necessary, like for book reports, which I hated, too. I did love to listen to a radio program called "Let's Pretend" where they told fairy tales, like Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White.

DMc: What is the best part about being a writer? What do you find to be the hardest part of writing?

BSMc: For me, the best part of being a writer is having a reader say she enjoyed my story and when does the next one come out.

The hardest part is getting the thoughts running through my brain down on paper where they make sense.

DMc: Whom or what gave you the encouragement to become a writer?

BSMc: My sons encouraged me when I started writing. I also discovered how much fun I had meeting characters that that whispered in my ears and wanted me to tell their stories.

DMc: What genre do you enjoy writing for the most? Why?

BSMc: Young Adult contemporary stories, with a touch of mystery, are my favorites. Why? I like to read these types of books. I also think the ages between 10 and 17 are full of wonder, learning, experimenting, and finding ones place in the world. I like to imagine what I would do in a particular situation, if I were that character. This makes me remember my teen years and relive them in a way.

DMc: Tell us about your latest project. Where did your inspiration come from?

BSMc: A paper found. A secret revealed. A girl's life changes forever.

(Thank you for letting me practice the first line telling what my story is about.) My latest project is a YA novel about a girl who discovers she's adopted and feels betrayed by the people she trusted the most, her parents. A newspaper article about sweethearts who had a child when they were young, gave the child up, went their separate ways, then years later reunited and found their son was the inspiration for this story.

DMc: What is your most valuable piece of networking material?

BSMc: I believe what's helped me the most in networking is getting my name out there on the Internet: presenting at Lea Schizas Muse It Up Writing Conference, hosting writers' virtual book tours, book reviews (thanks Donna), and my blogs.

DMc: What would you be if you were not a writer?

BSMc: A teacher. I loved the years I worked with children and would gladly do it again.

DMc: What advice would you provide to a newbie in writing for children?

BSMc:

- ✓ Study the types of books you'd like to write.
- ✓ Take a course on writing.
- ✓ Read, read, read.
- ✓ Join professional organizations such as the Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators.
- ✓ Sign up for message boards like Verla Kay's Blue Boards and Writing 4 Kids.
- ✓ Join a good critique group to get feedback on your work.
- ✓ If you truly want to be a writer, never give up.
- ✓ Have faith in yourself.

DMc: Please share with us a tidbit of information about your life that would surprise our readers.



BSMc: I was always a shy person, quiet, one or two best friends, never spoke up in class. But from the time I was a toddler, going to football games with my dad, I wanted to be a majorette. At the games, I waited for halftime when the band performed. I thought those girls in their short skirts, white boots, and silver batons were awesome. Well, in spite of my shyness, I did it. In junior high school, I joined the band, tried out for majorette, and made it. I also was a majorette in high school.

Visit Beverly at: <http://beverlystowemcclure.blogspot.com>, leave a comment on her most recent post, mention her interview and automatically enter to win a paperback copy of "Listen to the Ghost" or a PDF copy of "Secrets I Have Kept."

Donna's publishing credits include *Stories for Children Magazine*, *Stories for Children Newsletter*, *Kid Magazine Writers*, *Long Story Short*, *Institute of Children's Literature Rx for Writers*, *SCBWI Metro NY Newsletter*, and *Once Upon A Time Magazine* and a pending non-fiction article for *Boys' Quest Magazine*. She's also a children's book reviewer for *Musing Our Children Group*, *The National Writing for Children Center*, and *Stories for Children*.

Learn more about Donna at: <http://www.donnamcdine.com>, sign her guest book, mention Beverly's interview and receive a FREE copy of "Write What Inspires You! Author Interviews," compiled by Donna M. McDine.

L. Diane Wolfe

(October 2007)



I'm elated to have author & speaker, L. Diane Wolfe visiting today! She shares with us what inspires her to write. Read on for her insightful words:

What inspires me?

In contemplating the topic of writing young adult fiction, I have to ask the question - why do I write what I write? What is my true motivation for the words I put on paper? What impact do I want them to have on the world?

Sadly, I don't think enough authors and writers ask those questions of themselves!

You have to believe in the story you are creating. You have to know the subject matter, hold convictions in the storyline, and love your characters with all your heart. And you also have to be responsible for how others will view your work and what message they will take from your story.

The temptation for YA writers is to conform to the flavor of the moment. Currently dark fantasy and horror, steeped heavily in the macabre, is very common. Also at the top of the popular list are several salacious series following rich, spoiled teens partaking in all sorts of deviant behavior. Controversy sells, and these books move quickly off the shelves. But is their message really representing the heart of the writers?

When I began writing my series, *The Circle of Friends*, I had one purpose in mind - to inspire others to achieve. I had spent several years in a motivational training system and learned the principals of goal setting, people skills, and maintaining a positive attitude. Armed with this training, I

began seeking a vehicle through which I could encourage others. There were already plenty of non-fiction books available on the subject, so I decided to pour the knowledge into a fictional book series. Portraying healthy relationship dynamics and entertaining readers at the same time appealed to me, and my series rapidly took shape.

The underlying theme of overcoming flows through each book. LORI follows a swimmer with Olympic dreams and focuses on setting goals and a positive attitude. SARAH portrays a character lacking in self-esteem and desperate to find belief in herself. JAMES focuses on a young man trying to overcome past abuse and make something of his life. MIKE tells the story of a young man who can't forgive himself for a past mistake and ultimately questions his own beliefs. HEATHER, the one I am currently writing, portrays a headstrong character that must learn to accept others as they are and not be so selfish.

My inspiration now comes from another source as well. Letters and emails from fans, proclaiming that my books have restored their confidence and encouraged them to pursue their goals, keep me writing! My purpose was to motivate others and knowing The Circle of Friends has done just that is true success to me.

Now that you know what inspires me, I have to pose the questions - what inspires YOU?

Author & Speaker, L. Diane Wolfe <http://www.thecircleoffriends.net/>