

# MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA

## FLORIDA CHAPTER

May 2017

This is the first in a series titled “Getting to know our members”. Charles Todd picks a member at random from the membership list and does an interview. We look forward to your comments and suggestions.

### Diana Hurwitz Interview

by Charles Todd

Diana Hurwitz spent her childhood near Cincinnati daydreaming during school, reading books, and writing poetry. She recently relocated to Central Florida with her husband and two cats.

She has written a YA fantasy series as well as an expanding series on writing: *Story Building Blocks*. She recently released 14 *Build A Plot* workbooks including one for the Mystery genre.

Diana writes a blog featuring lessons on deep writing craft: *Game On! Crafting Believable Conflict* and contributes to the writer/editor blog: *The Blood Red Pencil*.

She belongs to the Society of Children’s Writers & Illustrators, ALAN, Mystery Writers of America.

She participates in the Ladyscribes critique group featuring authors Sharon Pielemeier, Cameron Steiman, Rita Woods, and Cynthia Adams.

When not writing, she indulges in reading, painting, jewelry design, travel, graphic art, and web design.

Q. You became a member of MWA in July of 2007. Thank you for your ten years supporting Mystery Writers! Your motto is “Life is too short for bad fiction.” What are you saying to your fans and the writing community?

A. We owe it to our readers to give them an optimal experience with our stories. As an avid reader, I live for books that drag me in on page one and don't let go until I reach the end. It isn't enough to pose an interesting question at the beginning. You have to keep readers immersed. I am a serious book addict.

Q. You write the *Mythikas Island Series*, how did your childhood experiences in Ohio draw you to this subject?

A. I was inspired by my teen daughter at the time. She asked why female protagonists had to have boyfriends. Why couldn't they just save themselves? She was sick of love triangles in YA. I

had been pondering writing stories about goddesses, maybe a series of global goddess figures. So the idea for *Mythikas Island* was born.

Q. The *Mythikas Island* Series is in four books:

*Book One: Diana* Jan 25, 2011 (published in 2008 - redesigned cover in 2011)

*Book Two: Persephone* Dec 2, 2009

*Book Three: Aphrodite* Jan 25, 2011

*Book Four: Athena* Nov 23, 2011

Your titles have a mixture of Roman and Greek Goddesses. What was your inspiration and ties to Roman and Geek mythology? Mythology is a means of teaching us or explaining the world around us. What was the underlying theme you were writing?

A: The theme of *Mythikas* is that you can overcome a dysfunctional family and save yourself. It is up to the next generation to right our wrongs. The gauntlet the girls must survive is an extreme example, but they learn a lot about their families, each other, and themselves as they undertake the survival exercise on a deserted island.

4. Looking at the publication dates I wonder if you wrote the books in order and published them differently. What was your creative process for the series?

A. They were published in order. I was not happy with the original covers made with my artwork but by the publisher. I had the opportunity to redo them and make them cohesive. It was created as a four book relay: each book is told from a different character's POV. I plan a ten-year anniversary collection edition for release in 2018.

Q. In June of 2011, you published *Story Building Blocks* book one of three. That has led to many books and work books on writing. I was amazed you were doing the *Mythikas Island Series* at the same time. You have gone on to write many inspirational guides on writing. What was your inspiration and goal with these books?

A. I developed the *Story Building Blocks* method while attempting to outline the *Mythikas* series. I had read many books about plotting etc. but none of them really connected the dots for me from *In the Beginning* to *The End*. The SBB method of layering conflict helped me connect the dots. My critique group encouraged me to share it with other writers. I have overcome multiple serious health issues since 2008 and very nearly gave up writing and blogging altogether. But I persevered and just this month released 14 *Build A Plot* workbooks in both print and e-book versions. There will be a *Build A World Workbook* later this month. The workbooks were part of my original vision; they just got sidelined for a few years.

Q. Do you consider writing an Art, Craft or a mixture of both?

A. It is definitely both. Some people have an innate ability to imagine people and places and put those images on paper. It helps to understand story architecture, whether you outline or not. You must know the rules to break them creatively. In *Story Building Blocks III*, the tagline is "Good

writers compose sentences. Great writers craft language." A brilliantly crafted cumulative sentence is a thing of beauty. Solid grammar and sentence structure makes the reading experience seamless.

Q. What is the greatest mistake or misconception new authors make/have?

A. That writing is easy money and all you have to do is upload or submit a rough draft. I go through at least 25 proof reading passes and find new things on each pass. You can write in isolation, but nothing makes your story better than a good critique group or beta readers. You cannot catch every plot hole and continuity error. It isn't possible. Your mind fills in the blanks. My critique group's running joke is, "So, you want me to read the story in your head, not the one you put on paper?"

Q. Who are your favorite authors or books? The ones you read over and over again.

A. Well, that list is long. My favorite mystery writers at the moment include Deborah Crombie, Tasha Alexander, Anna Huber, Tana French, Alafair Burke, and Anne Perry. I fell in love with Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie as a young girl. Mystery has always been my favorite genre. I love being part of MWA. My "to be read" list is updated with each newsletter. The MWA is a supportive community. They have wonderful workshops and so many talented writers sharing their expertise with others. The wealth of research books for mysteries surpasses any other genre. I also met Lee Lofland at a conference and highly recommend his Writer's Police Academy where you can get first-hand experience from cuffing a suspect to forensic evidence collection.

Q. Who are you reading now and what current author(s) do you recommend to our members?

A. I recommend my favorites of course. Most had new releases this year. I am currently reading a book by another favorite author: *The Widow's House* by Carol Goodman.

Q. You belong to many organizations. What drew you to MWA and the Florida Chapter?

A. I joined MWA after seeing Hallie Ephron at a writer's conference in Muncie, Indiana. My desire to write a mystery has been on a back burner for years, but I have an idea percolating. As long as mystery writers keep writing, I will never run out of books to read. I transferred to the Florida Chapter upon our move to The Villages, Florida in September of 2016.

I want to thank Diana for taking the time to work with me in this interview! Charles Todd