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THE DAMES' DOCKET

A Bimontly Newsletter from Level Best Books



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GREETINGS FROM THE DAMES

"It's a great blessing if one can lose all sense of time, all worries, if only for a short time, in a book." – Nella Last

Certainly during this time of pandemic, we're all looking for ways to escape the relentless and heartbreaking news we're confronted with every day. Spending most of our time at home with little opportunity to gather with family and friends for a meal or a party or a celebration, days have developed a sameness that can take a toll on our spirits.

How wonderful that authors can create books and stories that can provide an escape to different times and places and alleviate the boredom and despair that threatens to overtake so many of us. Yes, authors are providing an essential service, now more than ever. In essence, giving readers the opportunity to travel in spirit when, in reality, concerns for health and mortality prohibit us from doing so, is a real contribution.

So, Kudos! Keep writing! Stay safe and well. This, too, shall end.

Harriette, Shawn, & Verena

IN CONVERSATION WITH LINDA NORLANDER

LINDA, CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

When I was a child, I sat down at my mother's old Smith-Corona typewriter to write my first novel. It was an autobiography of a puppy and started, "I take pen in paw (with a little difficulty) to write my memoirs." The rest is lost to history, but I've been writing ever since. Short stories, humor, books for nurses on caring for patients at the end of life, literary novels and my favorite—mysteries. Even in the busiest times of my life I can't not write. (I have a closet full of dusty manuscripts to prove it.)

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE PUBLICATION OF DEATH OF AN EDITOR, THE FIRST OF THE CABIN BY THE LAKE SERIES. WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION?

Minnesota has this wonderful pristine wilderness called the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. I canoed it in my younger days and, for me, that part of the state has always had a mystical quality. For decades it's been a battleground between those who want economic development and those who want to preserve it. The controversy is heating up again, and I felt it was the right time to use it as a setting for a mystery series.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO JOIN THE MYSTERY FICTION COMMUNITY?

I've always been an avid reader of mysteries starting with Nancy Drew and making my way through the great writers we all know. Years ago, I was working on a serious literary novel when I heard an agent speak who said, "Go ahead and write that classic, but when you get stuck, write something you enjoy." I enjoy writing mysteries as much as I enjoy reading them.

JAMIE FOREST, YOUR PROTAGONIST, LEAVES NEW YORK TO RELOCATE TO A MINNESOTA NORTHWOODS LAKE. TELL US ABOUT JAMIE.

Jamie is running from the loss of her father, a divorce, and a very traumatic experience with the New York police. She thinks she can escape and start over in the old family cabin on the lake. She will find a connection to the land and also to a heritage she did not know she had. As a native New Yorker, she will also discover that life by the lake isn't as easy as she imagined. Fortunately, she has a wonderful dog companion and a healthy sense of humor to sustain her.

WHAT IS YOUR VERY FAVORITE BOOK?

“Wuthering Heights” by Emily Bronte. Every time I read it the story deepens. It’s dark, has mystery, romance and intriguing characters.

DO YOU HAVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO OFFER ASPIRING WRITERS?

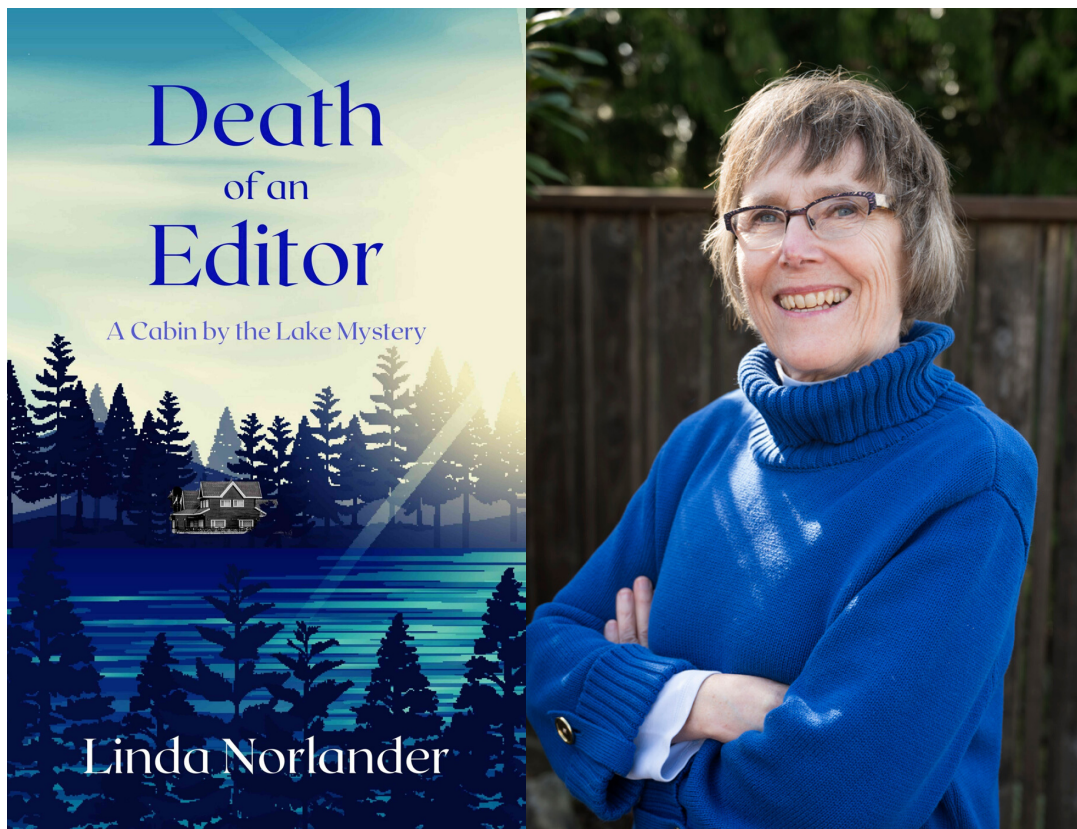
It's simple. Writers write and writers read. Keep putting the words on paper and let the authors of the world inspire you.

Linda Norlander has published short fiction and humor in a number of regional and national magazines. Additionally, she has written several award-winning books on end-of-life care including, *To Comfort Always*, *A Nurse’s Guide to End of Life Care*. *Death of an Editor* is the first book in A Cabin by the Lake Mystery series. She lives in Tacoma, Washington.

Connect with Linda:

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A New Author's Viewpoint

Promoting Your Work

by Liz Milliron

If you're a published author today, one thing is absolute. You have to market and promote your work. Since you're unlikely to have an exorbitant marketing budget, chances are you're going to look for low-cost options, and one of the lowest out there is social media. After all, you won't pay for a Facebook or Twitter account, and you'll have access to a large marketplace. Sounds great, right?

Except, if you talk to publicity experts, they'll all tell you one thing: social media doesn't sell books. Despite the fact that publishers and agents want to see you have a presence, and ask how many friends and followers you have, none of this translates into book sales.

Sounds contradictory, right?

Here's the thing. Few readers will take a chance on a brand-new, or at least a new-to-them, author simply because they saw a book cover or read a blurb on social media. Surveys of readers over the years have shown cheap books tend to get purchased then gather digital dust on e-readers. You don't just want someone to buy your book. You want them to buy it, read it, love it, and shout from the rooftops.

Because, in the end, that's what really sells books. Word of mouth. A reader learns of a new author from a trusted source: a friend, a favorite reviewer, a family member. An author they know from social media.

Right now, I know what you're thinking. "Liz, didn't you just say social media doesn't sell books?" Well, no, it doesn't. I stand by what I said previously. A reader is not likely to buy from a new-to-them author, just because they saw a book cover on social media.

But they will buy if they trust you. And that's where social media comes in. You don't sell your book on social media. You sell you.

How do you do it? Here's a few tips.

1. Pick 1-2 platforms you enjoy

This is key, because authors are always thinking they have to do All The Things. But if you try to be everywhere, you'll just exhaust yourself and wind up being not very good anywhere. If you narrow things down, you'll have a much better time. It's important you enjoy whatever platform you've chosen. If you don't, it'll come through your posts, and people will be turned off. And you don't want that.

An Author's Viewpoint

Continued...

Make sure your readers are on whatever platform you select. Because if they aren't, it's like yelling into an empty room, and that won't help at all. And don't make it "all book, all the time." People will quit listening. Talk about your hobbies, your children, your pets...be a real person. People do not buy books from a salesman, but they will buy from a person they trust.

2. Boosts vs ads

Boosts are where you throw money at a problem and hope for results. Ads are more targeted and require some work. They do not, however, have to cost a lot of money. Pay-per-click is the most cost effective. You want to choose your social media platform carefully (remember what I said about yelling into an empty room), plan your ad campaign, and execute it. Facebook, for example, provides tools to help you identify what ads are working, so you can make adjustments.

3. Use your connections for guest appearances

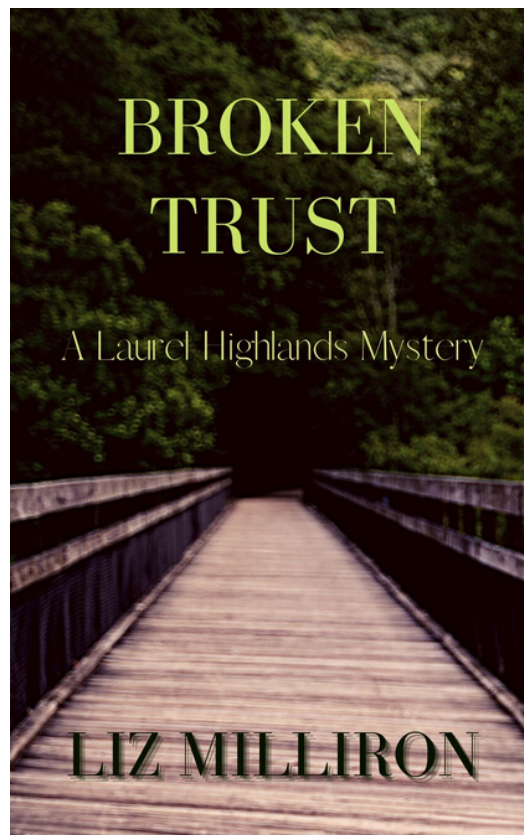
You've been going to conferences and meeting other authors, right? Now is the time to use those connections. If they are part of blogs or if they run a podcast, email them to pitch a guest post or an interview. They need content, and they'll thank you for helping them out. If you've gotten to know them well, they'll want to support you, too.

There are also companies that organize blog tours. You pay them, and they line up a week's worth of blogs (or more) for you to write guest posts for. However, while they may not be extravagantly expensive, they are growing less and less effective. And it's a lot of work because you usually have to craft original content for each stop on the tour. Most tours have at least one stop per day (some do more). I personally do not use professional blog tour services, and many of my author friends have stopped. Instead, I rely on my contacts at a couple of the more popular blogs, as well as a couple of book-bloggers I've developed relationships with, and arrange my own guest posts. I save time and money.

With the proper care and feeding, you can use social media to create a community around you. A group of people who have read and loved your books, and who will shout to the world. They can be your neighbor, someone who lives across town, or someone who lives across the country. Because that is the real power of social media. It allows you to craft connections with people you might never otherwise have met and turn them into True Fans. And True Fans are what sell books.



Liz Milliron is the author of The Laurel Highlands Mysteries series, set in the scenic Laurel Highlands of Southwestern Pennsylvania, and The Home Front Mysteries, set in Buffalo, NY during the early years of World War II. She is a member of Sisters in Crime, Pennwriters, and International Thriller Writers. Soon to be an empty-nester, Liz lives outside Pittsburgh with her husband, two children, and a retired-racer greyhound.





HISTORICAL
NOVEL SOCIETY

A
VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR AUTHORS AND READERS OF HISTORICAL FICTION

HARRIETTE
SACKLER

Level Best Books is encouraging its authors of historical fiction, as well as those who enjoying reading about times past, to join the Historical Novel Society.

This stellar organization supports its members by promoting its authors and publicizing their works in its Directory. For authors and readers alike, its quarterly Historical Novels Review, is a treasure trove of market news, publishing deals, interviews and reviews.

Conferences are held in the U.S. and the U.K. in alternating years. In 2019, Verena Rose and I attended the Historical Novel Society Conference held in the D.C. area. Since we both write historical short fiction and enjoy reading about a myriad of historical periods, we had a wonderful experience. We attended workshops led by excellent speakers and came away with new knowledge of familiar time periods and others we had not previously researched. For those of our Historia-imprint writers who have joined HNS, Level Best Books will be submitting notifications of the publication of your books, as well as advance copies for possible review.

In June, 2021, the Conference will be held in San Antonio. For more information, go to www.historicalnovelsociety.org.

RECENT RELEASES

