

Kerrie Droban: FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions About Running With The Devil



HOW DID YOU CONNECT WITH BIRD AND DECIDE TO WRITE HIS STORY?

In 2004, a mutual friend asked me if I would be interested in writing about the ATF sting against the Hells Angels, code named, Operation Black Biscuit. I was familiar with the case since it had received some national coverage on America's Most Wanted, and I knew several of the participants involved in the investigation.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE THE BOOK?

Approximately eighteen months. The book involved extensive investigation, and sensitive attention to several pending federal prosecutions. My goal was to write an accurate and compelling tribute to the undercover operatives' bravery and sacrifice. I wanted to show the human side of the investigation.

HOW MUCH OF THE BOOK IS REAL?

The experiences and anecdotes of the undercover operatives involved and the criminal acts described in the book are reflected in countless hours of covertly recorded conversations, affidavits, secondary sources as well as thousands of documents generated by law enforcement agencies and the United States Attorney's Office. I used poetic license with some of the dialogue in order to help the story flow, and was purposefully vague in some places of the book in order to protect the operatives and the integrity of the investigation. I was mindful not to compromise future investigations by disclosing trade secrets. Some names in the book are pseudonyms but most were the official names of the operatives' adopted personas as well as the Hells Angels' nicknames.

WHAT WAS THE MOST SURPRISING PART OF THE BOOK FOR YOU?

All of it. I was used to writing fiction. This book posed a difficult challenge — writing non-fiction that was accurate yet entertaining. Writing the book was rife with tension not only because of the subject matter but also the personalities involved and potential repercussions to my safety. I couldn't just write and investigate, I also had to balance competing priorities, gauge the disclosure of certain information and monitor the legal as well as personal ramifications of being associated with such a project. I wasn't prepared for the attention or scrutiny of writing such a controversial book. I am generally a private person who enjoys the process of writing — being alone with my thoughts, creating characters out of whole cloth and watching them develop. Here, the characters were formed and it was a challenge to make them interesting and compelling and not merely clichés. It was difficult to be confined — I couldn't embellish or invent facts or scenarios. I had to work within parameters that were at times suffocating.

DO YOU WRITE OTHER KINDS OF BOOKS?

Yes. I write suspense thrillers, two of which have been previously published. While I have never used real people or scenarios in my fiction I have borrowed from my own experiences as a litigator and an attorney whose practice specializes in capital representation.

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WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

I think I was born writing. At the age of seven I began to write seriously and even asked my parents for a typewriter so that I could put the stories together in “print” format. I wrote predominantly poetry until I finished law school. In fact, I attended two poetry programs at The Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars and The University of Arizona where I studied with poets, Carolyn Kizer, Peter Sacks, Jon Anderson and even playwright Edward Albee. I published several poems from my manuscript entitled “The Language of Butchers” and received quite a few awards for my efforts. But, alas, at a dismal \$10 per poem I had to resort to other kinds of writing to make ends meet.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

I’m an avid reader! In rare moments of spare time I love to read murder mysteries and thrillers.

WHAT IS YOUR TYPICAL WRITING DAY LIKE?

At three o’clock in the morning I’m wide awake usually staring at my computer. I call it my “witching hour”. My goal is to write two pages a day or two hours a day. I try to do something each day related to writing, whether it’s working on a current project, plotting, researching another one, or simply reading a book for pleasure. By 6:00 am, my focus has switched to law, court and legal briefs.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WRITING PROCESS?

I revise like crazy, every sentence, image, description. I read my manuscripts aloud to catch nuances in dialogue and the rhythm of the story. Words should flow like music or, more accurately, percussion. My books are derived from poetry where one word conveys multiple meanings. I work with images, symbols, metaphors. I like to assign animal traits to my characters because it helps me to be consistent. My villain in my first novel, **In the Company of Darkness**, for example, had the attributes of a spider—black oily eyes, sleek, taut skin; he enjoyed wrapping his victims in web-like gauze and his killing room was a dark, corner space. I have never written a “first draft” because by the time I’ve completed my manuscript it’s been revised at least ten times. Often my first three chapters are more like “speed bumps” as I learn my characters and the plot. I toss those chapters and start over. Typically the fifth chapter is my first. **The Water’s Edge** began with the title. The plot evolved from the theme of water. I am what they call “a writer in the mist” in that I never outline. It disrupts my creativity and spoils the surprise for me. If I know how everything fits before I write then I have no need to write the story.

Interviews and Scheduling Workshops and Speaking Engagements:

Ms. Droban is available for radio and in-person television interviews with prior arrangement through her publicist:
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