

Kerrie Droban: Biography

Criminal Defense Attorney
Award-Winning Author



Kerrie M. Droban heads her own private law firm in Phoenix, Arizona, where she specializes in criminal defense and capital litigation. She is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars, where she studied with playwright Edward Albee and with poets Jon Anderson and Carolyn Kizer. Published excerpts of her collection of poems entitled, "The Language of Butchers," have earned numerous awards, including the Academy of American Poet's Award, New Letters International Poetry Award, Poet Lore Award, Amelia Encore Award and the Daniel Shockett Award.

Kerrie's published novels include, **In the Company of Darkness** and **The Watchman's Circle**, which won the Daphne Du Maurier Award for excellence in suspense writing. Critics have compared Kerrie's writing to Patricia Cornwell and Tami Hoag and have described her novels as "riveting, compelling and shocking" filled with "heart-stopping action" and at times "terrifying characters" "who will live in our thoughts for a long time to come." Her 2007 non-fiction, true crime book entitled **Running with the Devil: The True Story of ATF's Infiltration of the Arizona Hells Angels** earned her a 2008 Commissioner's Medal for Superior Performance from the Kentucky Department of Corrections after she was a keynote speaker at the National Major Gang Task Force 14th Annual Conference.

Kerrie is a former Maricopa County Attorney Prosecutor. She is the recipient of the Fegly Moot Court Award for Excellence in Oral Advocacy and the Outstanding Closing Argument Award for Excellence in Trial Advocacy. As a contributing author, Kerrie wrote a search and seizure manual distributed to APAAC (Arizona Prosecutors Association) and has participated in over thirty felony jury trials, authored over fifty legal briefs, one of which, State v. Ring was heard by the United States Supreme Court and resulted in the remand of over 180 death penalty cases nationwide.

Interviews and Scheduling Workshops and Speaking Engagements:

Ms. Droban is available for radio and in-person television interviews with prior arrangement through her publicist:
Carol Webb at info@bella-entertainment.com or 623.332.5004

Kerrie Droban: Interview

Excerpts from Interview by Fallen Angel Reviews



DO YOU HAVE A SET WRITING SCHEDULE?

I write daily (except Sunday) from 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. out of necessity. My case load and family obligations make it impossible to think let alone write creatively at a normal, sane hour. I actually like getting up before dawn; it's QUIET! And I love the aroma of fresh coffee in the house.

DESCRIBE A DAY IN THE LIFE OF KERRIE DROBAN

A day in the life of Kerrie Droban... crazy crazy crazy. I start my days at 4:00 and end at 1:00 sometimes later depending on deadlines. I have a heavy case load so I devote most of my "waking hours" to work related efforts. I do a lot of post-conviction cases that involve a lot of legal writing, research and some investigation. I split my days-work in the mornings until 2:00, pick up my kids (they're 2 and 4) and play with them until 9:00 when they go to sleep and then work again. I make time for hubby in the evenings; he's a great cook and often makes me dinner. Chocolate helps.

WHO OR WHAT INSPIRES YOU THE MOST?

I'd have to say my job inspires me; every day I get such great material for books. Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction and I find it challenging and exciting to craft stories around some of the bizarre events I encounter in court, in prison and in my transcripts. I'm also inspired by location — my novels take place in Phoenix during the monsoon season. Weather plays a vital role in my books, almost becoming a character in itself. Landscape and place certainly played a big part in my poetry. Ideas and words come to me first as images.

WHAT AUTHORS DO YOU ENJOY READING?

My favorite authors are: Nelson DeMille, Lisa Jackson, Tami Hoag, Lisa Gardner, Harlan Coban.

DO YOUR STORIES JUST COME TO YOU OR DO YOU PLAN THEM OUT?

My books have all begun with an image, or the title itself and the story has evolved from that. I trust my instincts a lot. I tend to create best when I don't over analyze or second guess the source. All three of my novels came to me first as titles; **The Water's Edge** had a theme throughout that became vital to the story. Water and the strange contradiction of it in a desert landscape. Water nourishes, destroys, saves etc... **The Watchman's Circle** came as a title and later evolved into the name of the police club. My first novel is the only one so far where I began writing after witnessing a real incident in court — an inmate slashed the throat of a prosecutor while on the chain being escorted into the jury box. The incident struck me and I started to write a "what if" story. The title came later as did the spiders. I never outline or "plot"; rather I let the characters drive me.

HAS YOUR LIFE CHANGED ANY SINCE YOU'VE BECOME A PUBLISHED AUTHOR? IF SO, HOW?

Being published has given me validation as a writer but it hasn't really "changed me" per se. It's gratifying to know that others enjoy my stories; that my words give them goose bumps. I love to write and the sheer act of putting words together is thrilling for me; to be able to have others enjoy that too is... well, incredible.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ASPIRING AUTHORS?

Read everything they can get their hands on! Reading is the best "tool" of the trade. Trust your instincts; don't be swayed by trends or others methods of writing. It's easy to doubt yourself when you first start and to let others dictate how you "should" do something; i.e. outline vs. write. Every writer has her unique style and rhythm and it's vital that she find that beat and listen to it.

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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.

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