



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

Vol. 1, No. 23, September 6, 2019

In this issue:

- War Time
- Author Spotlight: Barb Warner Dean
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1800s

From the Editor

“Move a bit to the east.” These words would be spoken to a passenger in a car, asking them to move over to make room. Oh, wouldn’t those of us who are directionally challenged have a time of this?

I was reading *Supernavigators*, by David Barrie. I know – not a historical fiction book. But yet, it shined a light on something about historical fiction that I need to take closer note of. The author was mentioning how the Aboriginal Guugu Yimithirr of Queensland (Australia) never use words like “right” or “left.” They only use the points of the compass. He quoted from a book by Guy Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages*.

“If Guugu Yimithirr speakers want someone to mover over in the car to make room, they will say naga-naga manaayi, which means “move a bit to the east” ... If you are reading a book facing north and a Guugu Yimithirr speaker wants you to skip ahead, he will say, “go further east,” because pages are flipped from east to west.”

Guy Deutscher explains it like this:

“If you have to know your bearings to understand the simplest things people say...you will develop the habit of calculating and remembering the cardinal directions at every second of your life. And as this habit of mind will be inculcated almost from infancy, it will soon become second nature, effortless and unconscious.”

This concept fascinated me. Now, since I’m not writing any short stories or novels involving the Guugu Yimithirr, I don’t really need to know this information. But it reminded me how many nuances the people from the past have. Some we may know about. Some we may not. But without enough research, or without digging deep enough, we may not discover something that’s essential to our story or our characters. If I didn’t know about this, I may from afar try to write a short story without including this facet of the people. If the reader doesn’t know, then all would be fine. But if the reader *does* know, and that’s missing, it’s going to throw them right out of the story.

It makes me pause and reflect on the stories I do write. I wonder if I’m including enough of these seemingly inconsequential factors that could make for a better, and more realistic, tale.

But then, there's another edge to this sword of knowledge. Because although the little-known facts may be a vital part of what you're writing, not all readers will know this information. So we also have to include some explanation into the story without slowing down the action or narration.

Ah – the world of historical fiction. There is so much to learn and so many fine points to polish.

Trisha

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Writing Wartime Stories

You can't see a list of historical fiction books without finding many that are set at wartime. There are many books written during the more recent wars, but most of these fall outside of what is termed 'historical fiction'. Other wars fall on the other end of the spectrum, such stories with Vikings or Romans.

Most historical fiction wartime stories I venture to claim are tales set during the Civil War, World War 1, or World War 2. While I'm sharing some information this week, I do not claim to be an expert on writing about wartime stories. I've dabbled with a short story or two set during World War 1. Another few short stories occur during World War 2, along with *Fat and Sassy*, which was based on my mother's young years during World War 2. But that's the extent of my wartime writing.

Born in 1936, my mom's WW2 memories are of a young girl growing up, and her memories of a mother raising young children at that time. Rationing, knitting socks, and recycling metal for the war effort – these are activities I feel familiar with. I've heard the story about her teacher in Glendora, Mrs. Ogg, driving around town with a metal washtub tied to the back of her car to celebrate the end of the war. When Mrs. Ogg's husband returned home, he brought some parachute fabric with him. Mrs. Ogg passed some of that down to my grandmother who made blouses for the girls. My mother abhorred them – she said they were hot, hot, hot to wear!

These are the wartime events I'm comfortable writing about. I'm not sure I want to delve deeper into writing about these horrific events. Although, I do like reading the works of other authors. I just finished *The Last Year of the War*, by *Susan Meissner*, and enjoyed it immensely. Following is some advice from other authors much more versed in these specific time frames.

WRITING ABOUT THE CIVIL WAR

Stephanie Wong Ken, in [How to Write Civil War Historical Fiction](#) shares these tips:

- Research books about this historical event
- Look at magazines, newspapers, and catalogues from the time period
- Read diaries, letters, and personal documents by soldiers
- Attend a Civil War reenactment
- Visit Civil War historical museums
- Contact local civil War historical societies
- Read examples of historical fiction

WRITING ABOUT WORLD WAR 1

Sophie Masson, author of *My Father's War and 1914*, shares this in *Writing about World War One...*

"...It was a story that both flowed naturally from having been in the areas I was writing about and being immersed in pictures and documents of the time, but was also very hard to write. This was a work of fiction so it had to work as an engaging story, especially given the age of my readers, but I also felt a great responsibility to tell it in a way that would not trivialize or falsify. It was a very delicate balance to strike

and at times felt almost impossible (and saddening; I found myself weeping several times over scenes) but in the end it worked.”

WRITING ABOUT WORLD WAR 2

Sean Munger shares some of his own thoughts In *Like Bathing in Fire: How to Write about World War II*:

- Another thing you’ll discover quickly is that you can’t be emotionally detached. Writing about World War II – I mean really trying to write about it, to capture it – is like giving your soul a bath in fire.
- World War II was one of the most complex events ever to occur in world history, and like a giant machine, each little piece of it affected something else. Thus, it’s crucial to go into World War II writing with an overall understanding of the whole thing, from a birds-eye perspective.
- You’re going to have to go to a library, check out a stack of books and read them all. If you’re writing a spy story, you need to find books on espionage and the spy services of the countries involved as well as their opposite numbers. If you’re writing a romance involving women on a home-front assembly line, you’re going to need to know where the factories were located, what the working conditions were like, what the hours were, what jobs women did, how they were trained for them, etc. If you’re writing about the Holocaust, you need to know where the death camps were, who ran them, where their victims came from and everything you can find about how they lived before the war.
- Collect Details: In the course of your research, you will need to “collect” things you can use in your writing, details, anecdotes and descriptions that will make your story live. First-person written accounts are the best way to go about this.
- Appreciate the enormity of the loss, devastation and fear that the war brought to the world...That is why I say that writing about the war is like bathing in fire. Some things I’ve read and some places I’ve taken my mind while in the process of writing our book have been inconceivably awful, just soul-wrenching. That was the reality of the war. You have to tap into it if you’re going to write realistically about it.

LINKS TO ARTICLES ABOUT WARTIME WRITING:

How to Write Civil War Historical Fiction

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-Civil-War-Historical-Fiction>

Writing about World War One...

<https://firebirdfeathers.com/2018/04/25/writing-about-world-war-one/>

Like bathing in fire: How to write about World War II.

<https://seanmunger.com/2015/10/28/like-bathing-in-fire-how-to-write-about-world-war-ii/>

LINKS TO DIARIES FROM WARTIME:

Diaries from the Civil War:

https://civilwardigital.com/html/civil_war_diaries.html

Diaries from World War 1:

<https://www.firstworldwar.com/diaries/>

Diaries from World War 2:

<http://ww2today.com/featured/diaries-of-world-war-ii>

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When I saw *The Whistle Stop Canteen* coming out as a new release earlier in August, I was excited. Although I haven't written much in the era of World War 2, I've read a lot of books set in this time frame and enjoy them. I was even more excited when Barb agreed to be one of our featured authors. We scheduled a time slot, and as I was putting the newsletter together realized that she's appearing in the week where we got to W – and the article this week is on War Time. That was an accident, and now I'm feeling a bit intimidated because Barb would have been a much better candidate to write something about the war.

Keep reading to see some of the interesting tidbits that Barb has to share about her writing journey. I, for one, was fascinated to learn about the Clubmobile program.



Welcome, Barb! You're celebrating a new release in August, *The Whistle Stop Canteen*, set in the turmoil of WW2. You have another book out that's set in the same time frame, *On the Homefront*. What was it that drew you to write in this era?

I've always been a fan of historical fiction, but when we were living in Germany, we visited the American Cemetery in Normandy and I learned there was an American woman, a civilian, buried there, and I felt compelled to learn her story. That research grew into *On The Homefront*. Once I started learning what American women were doing in WW2, right here in the U.S., I kept uncovering great stories and turned one of them into *The Whistle Stop Canteen*.

Did you find any challenges in writing about life during World War 2?

Since I'm mostly writing about American women here in the U.S., I find it most challenging to research basic things like plumbing, transportation, communication, etc. Luckily, there are a lot of great books of journals and letters by the Greatest Generation, as well as recorded oral histories, to help fill in the gaps.

Do you have any favorite methods you use in researching your books?

I try to visit the sites I'm writing about, including museums, historical societies, and towns. I started by visiting historical places and museums while we lived in Germany. I've been to the WW2 Museum in New Orleans several times, as well as many smaller museums across the U.S. A couple of summers ago, my husband and I went to North Platte, NE, the setting of *The Whistle Stop Canteen*, visited the town, the train station, and the Lincoln County Historical Museum. They were wonderful about giving me access to all of their records, photos, letters, and everything to do with the canteen. It was extremely useful.

Tell us about one of your favorite characters from one of your books.

As much as I like Maggie, from *The Whistle Stop Canteen*, I have to say Tom is definitely a favorite. When he sauntered into the Canteen, leaned up against the door jam, and started teasing Maggie, I knew who he was from the very start. He was a fun character to write, despite his secrets and shortcomings.

In *On the Homefront*, one of the characters goes to the front lines as part of the American Red Cross Clubmobile program. Can you tell us a little bit about this program and how it came to play such an important part in your storyline?

The Army and American Red Cross decided that, after the Normandy invasion, they wanted mobile clubs to follow the troops across the continent to help keep morale high. 500 college-education American women stepped up to take on jobs as Clubmobile Girls, driving through battlefields fields and risking their lives to bring a taste of home to our soldiers on the line. I couldn't believe so few people knew of this program, especially since these "Doughnut Dollies" existed in the Korea and Vietnam wars as well. They are unsung heroes who deserve recognition for all they did for soldiers in every part of the war.

On your website (www.barbwarnerdeane.com) you have some photographs of a 2007 visit to Normandy and the American Cemetery. What was it like walking the land that played such a vital part in the war, with such tragic consequences for so many? Did visiting Normandy alter your writing about wartime?

I talk about that day whenever I present my program entitled "Women of WWII: On the Front Lines & the Home Front" at libraries, historical societies, etc., and every time I describe it, I get choked up. The French still fly the U.S. flag, not only at the American Cemetery but in the towns of Normandy. When I was there, a French woman and her grandchild were placing flowers on the grave of an unknown American soldier. The memories of the battles that took place on the beaches below are overwhelming, bittersweet, and long-lasting, so it's heart-warming to learn that the gratitude and respect for those lost in battle there are still strong. It's a very moving experience and definitely started me down the road of writing WW2-era historical novels.

Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?

In addition to my WW2-era historical novels, I also write contemporary romantic suspense. The first 2 books in my Harper's Glen series are now available: *Killing Her Softly* and *And Then There Was You*. While all 4 of my books are available in paperback and e-book, *On The Homefront* and *Killing Her Softly* are also available in audiobooks. Last, but not least, the ebook of *Killing Her Softly* will be on sale for \$.99 starting tomorrow (9/7-10) as a BookBub featured deal.



You can find Barb's books here:

The Whistle Stop Canteen - <http://bit.ly/TWSCkindle>

On The Homefront - <http://bit.ly/OnTheHomefront>

Killing Her Softly - <http://bit.ly/eKillingHerSoftly>

You can find Barb here:

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/barbwarnerdeane/>

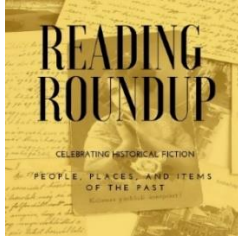
Goodreads - <https://www.goodreads.com/BarbWarnerDeane>

BookBub - <https://www.bookbub.com/authors/barb-warner-deane>

Barb Warner Deane is the author of 4 published novels of strong women in small towns, *On The Homefront*, *Killing Her Softly*, *And Then There Was Your*, and *The Whistle Stop Canteen*. Barb grew up in the Finger Lakes area of New York. She graduated from Cornell University and the University Of Connecticut School of Law. Barb, her husband, and family have lived in the Chicago area for the past twenty-five years, other than two years in Frankfurt, Germany and two years in Shanghai, China. In addition to writing, Barb is a genealogy buff, loves to read, is a huge fan all things Harry Potter, and is crazy for both U.S. and international travel. Now that she and her husband are empty-nesters, she's making plans to expand on her list of having visited 47 states and 42 countries on 6 continents.

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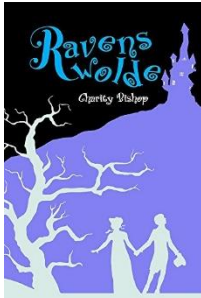
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The 1800s

Ravenswolde

Charity Bishop



What if you knew when someone was about to die... and could do nothing to stop it?

Each time, it starts as an itch in the back of her throat. It builds into a scream that shatters windows... and brings death.

Elsbeth does not know what she is, until she arrives at Ravenswolde. Fresh from a nunnery, with only her faith as a comfort, she is thrust into a world full of murderous intentions and unseen adversaries. In the school's cold corridors, above a haunted wood, students learn the art of murder... seduction... betrayal... to fear and prey upon one another, in training for a future as one of Napoleon's assassins.

She has three chances to refuse and resist instruction. Three. The first earns her a warning. The second, a visit with the school's mysterious Professor Hayes. The third... death.

Will she choose her faith, or her life?

Thornwicke

Charity Bishop

Seventeen-year-old Evangeline is about to discover what is different about her. She has had suspicions all along, but it is not until an aunt she never knew about turns up that her life tumbles into an adventure. Now, she is in the northern wood... a place where nothing is as it seems, where the ancient house of Dragonspire shifts its rooms around, and an unknown evil lurks nearby.

All she wants are answers to her questions.

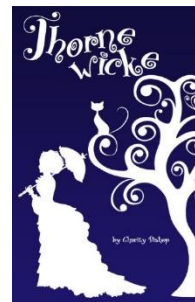
If she is not a witch, what is she?

What is the creature that continues to follow her to and from school?

Why has her mother never told her about her aunt until now?

Has the great inventor, Nikola Tesla, anything to do with it?

And most of all, what is really in the northern woods?



Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at texastrishafaye@yahoo.com to see about scheduling your book or short story in a future issue.

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