



Vol. 3, No. 29 September 3, 2021

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From the Editor



Hello my historical fiction lovers! Happy September!

September is starting out good with a new release from our friend, Chrystyna Lucyk-Berger – *The Woman at the Gates*. She’s been posting some fascinating tidbits on Facebook about her newest book and how it relates to her family history. Go check out her Facebook page to read more about it.

Due to extenuating circumstances, we had to reschedule the author interview that was slated to run in this issue. In lieu of no author interview, I

added two articles I wrote. The first, *Writing Blocks: Conscious and Unconscious* is an essay I did for another project. As it reflects issues author’s deal with in their writing, and also a small bit about some historical fiction books that have been on my backburner for about two years, I thought I’d share it with you.

The second article, *Keeping the Memories Alive*, is about how some family memories can make their way into our stories. I know many of the authors in *Pages of the Past* have used family stories as a starting point for many books, or characters in their books.

Stay tuned for future issues –In October’s issue we’ll be chatting with Mary Armstrong!

Trisha

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New Release

The Woman at the Gates

Chrystyna Lucyk-Berger



1944, Germany: Gazing through the barbed wire fence, up to the pale blue sky, Antonia dreams of home: cherry orchards, golden fields, and the man she loves, who she may never see again...

Resistance fighter **Antonia** is out in the forest behind her family's beloved farm when the Nazi soldiers arrive. As she sees her sister **Lena** and her young nephews herded towards the trucks, guns pointed at their heads, she faces a split-second, heart-wrenching decision: to stay hidden, stay free and continue the fight. Or to give herself up and go with her family to protect them-no matter what lies ahead.

As she clutches her nephew's little hand in hers, her other arm tight around Lena, she knows she has made the right choice. And as the truck rattles towards a brutal labor camp, and they start to wonder what fate has in store for them, Antonia's only thought is of how to escape.

Because before they were captured, Antonia worked tirelessly to free her country from those who had turned her homeland into a bloody battleground. By her side had been clever, handsome **Viktor**. The man she was to marry, whose love shone like a light in the darkness of war surrounding them.

Antonia does not know if Viktor has been caught or executed. But she knows she must try to find a way back to him and she cannot wait any longer to be saved. Her precious nephews will die without proper food and they could all be killed at any moment.

The world outside the camp gates is full of danger, but they have to find a way through them first. And that is their only hope, even if it costs Antonia her life. **The Nazis have taken everything from her, but they can never take away her courage...**

Writing Blocks: Conscious and Unconscious

This topic is on writing blocks, which I think that all authors suffer from periodically. Probably some more than others, but I doubt any writer is totally immune.

Many times, we see the blocks that challenge us. We look them in the face and acknowledge that they're there. The 'I don't have enough time', the 'I'm not a good enough writer', the 'I'm not good enough for this project' blocks. Or the 'I don't have the money for an editor', 'I don't have the platform to back me up', or any other sort of excuse we can come up with.

It's not like we're purposely putting these obstacles in our way. They exist. Sometimes we fight them. Sometimes we embrace them.

Sometimes the hurdle slowing us down is something that we aren't even aware of.

I discovered this last week in a dream.

My *Goss Hollow* book is one that stalled after Chapter One. And I didn't even realize what the problem was. Or should I say what 'one of the problems' was, as there may certainly be more than one issue acting as a logjam on this book.

About mid-2019, I had my brilliant idea. (Far from a lone brilliant idea – as I seem to have many. Far too many, it appears.) I wanted to write a historical fiction series, based on my ancestors. *Goss Hollow* would follow my great-great-great-great-grandparents as they moved to northwest Arkansas in a wagon train in 1851. This is the move where my Goss lineage started in Arkansas.

One side note about one reason I was so excited about this first book in the series is my four-time-great-grandmother's name. She was Martha Patricia "Patsy" Goss, born in Maryland in 1783. I am a Patricia Faith "Patsy", born 175 years later. It's felt like a special connection to be writing a story honoring a great-grandmother with the same name.

The next book, *Logan Hollow*, would follow my Logan ancestors in the late 1800s to early 1900s in Missouri. Actually, in this book I planned to focus on Charity Logan, who was a step-great-great-grandmother. Although not a blood relative, she was an herbal healer, which is a role that resonates with my heart. I've long been a lover of the herbal realm and had a small herb and garden store over twenty years ago. To know that I had a relative – even if she was a step- that was an herbal healer is very exciting to me.

In the third book, *Sassafras Hollow*, the Logan line and the Goss line have been joined in Beatrice Jones, my grandmother. Her dad, Papa Goss, was the moonshiner in an Arkansas hollow. Casey Jones from Missouri, was the 'runner' and when he came to Arkansas to pick up the load of 'shine' he met Bea. They married, my mother was born, and now I, the first born of that generation want to write the story and have the family tales live on.

So here I am, in 2019, researching my grand idea, getting ready to start working on *Goss Hollow*. I created the manuscript 11/22/19. I wrote the first chapter and polished it up. I took it to my writer's group 1/2/2020.

And that's as far as I've gotten.

I first blamed the slowdown on Covid. Our world essentially shut down just after this. I haven't been to a writer's group since. Although our group did begin meeting in person several ago, I haven't attended a meeting since.

Then I blamed my halt on 'other projects'. Other 'brilliant ideas' surfaced, and I had to follow through on them.

And gradually, these books keep getting pushed from one year to the next. Until I had my dream and realized that there is another issue that I haven't dealt with yet.

In my dream I was talking with a friend, who happens to be black. And I was explaining to her about my dilemma with the book. Two of my ancestor lines owned slaves. One family owned two and one family owned three. I was telling my friend – in this dream world – about how conflicted I was about this and hating the idea that my ancestors had owned other human beings.

Now granted, this wasn't a *Gone with the Wind* type situation where they owned tens or hundreds. But still – my family members in the past owned humans. And that doesn't settle well in my soul.

One family were the Goss' that moved to Arkansas in 1851- Benjamin Franklin Goss and Martha Patricia Goss. The other family was the Logan's. Not Charity, but her husband when he first married was gifted some slaves as a wedding present. One family had two and one family had three. Without going back through my notes that I haven't looked at for two years, I don't recall which family had two and which family had three.

As I write these words now, I still feel the inner conflict in this. And I know that I can't continue with this series until I resolve this.

Granted, these books are historical fiction. So even though they're based on a few known family facts, about 98% of the book is going to be fiction. Which means I can craft their world as I see fit. I can totally leave out this tidbit and forget it existed. Or I can use this tidbit as one of the few known facts of my family and move forward, incorporating their slaves into the story.

Which will it be? I have no idea.

This may not be the whole reason that I've stalled on these books. There may be other issues compounding my decision not to move forward with these yet.

But...if it surfaced in a dream, I daresay that this looming issue is larger than I've acknowledged.

And before I can proceed, I need to assess all the things I've perceived as blocks on these books.

Am I alone in this? I dare say not.

I wonder if there's a support group for us – a 12-step program for authors with unconscious writing blocks in their life. I'll have to check and see if there's a local chapter. Maybe I'll run for President. After all, I am very qualified. Anyone else want to join me?

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Keeping the Memories Alive

It's always fun as an author when we can use elements of our family history as part of our writing. It feels like you're keeping a small memory of your beloved ancestors alive – at least in a small fragment. Others may not realize that they've read something that was inspired by a family member past, but you as the author know.

I'm finding out that I'm not the only one that enjoys this small tribute to our loved ones. Last year, in a guest post – [Mom and Dad May Be Gone but They Live on in My Series](#) - author Lindsay Downs shared about how characteristics of his parents live on in his Upson PI mysteries. (Lindsay is the featured author in *Pages of the Past* April 19th issue)



You'd think that writing further back in time, say in the time of Mary Queen of Scots, it wouldn't be possible to include family snippets. Not true. Author Emily-Jane Hills Orford, in writing *Queen Mary's Daughter*, was able to use characteristics of her beloved grandmother as the grandmother in the tale. In the debut issue of [Pages of the Past](#), Emily-Jane shared how her grandmother was a factor in her historical interests. In her author spotlight, she shares:

"I have always been fascinated with the life and times of Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I. Once again, this was a shared interest with my grandmother."

In my own writing, pieces of family history and characters have been used here and there. One of my Vintage Daze Short Stories I was working on ended up being the most fun when Grandpa Jones (deceased since 1976) pushed his way into the story.

Two small 1928 cookbooks were the original inspiration for 'Best Thing Since Sliced Bread.' One I'd purchased in an antique store and one I'd inherited from one of the elderly women that lived next door to us when I was a child. That's all I knew about the story – is that it would be set in 1928.

I researched events in 1928 to see if there was anything I could work into the story. I saw that in Chillicothe Missouri, the first loaf of sliced bread came out that year. My Grandpa Jones grew up in a small town, Dawn, outside of Chillicothe and his brother, Uncle Scott, had a farm outside Chillicothe where my mom and Aunt Ida were born. Voila! I had the place. The vague outline of a young flapper girl and her quest for cooking began to form.

I also saw that Chillicothe held a popular Chevrolet Day that year. And I read that that's the year the Hall Brothers Company, in Kansas City, changed their name to their trademarked Hallmark, and started using the new Hallmark logo on their cards. Since I work part time for Hallmark, I knew I wanted to include this part, so the young flapper, Luetta, instantly got herself a boyfriend that just happened to work for Hall Brothers.

The story had been 'brewing' for several weeks and I was a few scenes into it, when I happened to be talking to my mom one afternoon. I was telling her about the new story idea and where it was set. "Grandpa would have been a young boy in 1928 though?" I asked.

“Oh, no. He was born in 1908, so he would have been twenty years old.”

“Twenty years old? So if Chillicothe had a Chevrolet Day, he would have been there then?”



“Absolutely,” she replied. “He was a Chevy man his whole life. That’s all he ever drove. I’m sure he would have been there.” Mom continued to tell me a family story that Grandpa had repeated many times throughout his later years. He was driving through town – in a Chevy – and had one arm around the girl in the car. (Pre-Grandma Jones’ days) The constable pulled him over and said, “Casey, you need to use both hands.” Grandpa, the smart-alecky young man that he was, responded, “But, officer, I need one hand to drive with.”

Well, Luetta already had a boyfriend, but now – how to work a young Grandpa Jones into the tale? Luetta’s best friend, Amanda, had to meet Casey so I could work this family story in.

A short time later, my cousin – not knowing I was working on this story-texted me one morning about another Grandpa Jones story. Uncle Alvin had shared about when Grandpa was running a trunk load of moonshine up from Arkansas to Missouri, stowed in the trunk and covered with armloads of hay. He was stopped and the officer said his lights were out. Grandpa played dumb like he didn’t know. The officer opened the trunk asked, “What’s with all the hay?” Grandpa replied, “Why, officer, you feed animals with it.” And the officer closed the trunk and Grandpa went on his way.

Yes, that was written into the short story too. In real life, the Grandpa I knew was such a quiet, unassuming man. Yet here he is forty years later getting a little pushy from the afterlife, pushing his way into the story. No one else will know as they read that these two parts are real-life tales, from a Grandpa’s younger days so long ago. But I’ll know and feel good about keeping a small part of his history alive.



Grandpa Jones with Grandma and their passel of kids
(My mom is the oldest daughter, standing in the back.)

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