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Tracy Krauss - "Expression Express"

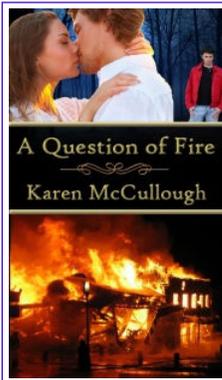
the creative process from a Christian perspective

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2012

Meet Karen McCullough

It's my pleasure to host another author from the '25 Years in the Rearview Mirror - 52 Authors Look Back' blog tour! As you know, this is a great anthology put together by Stacy Juba, featuring 52 authors who reminisce about life 25 years ago. You'll want to learn more about the book and the tour at the bottom of the page. Right now, however, I am pleased to introduce Karen McCullough.



Hi Karen. Tell us how you started writing.

Actually I sort of slid into writing sideways. I spent fifteen years as a computer programmer, a job I loved until burnout set in. (You know you're burned out when you start dreaming lines of Cobol.) I moved into writing software documentation, discovered that I actually enjoyed writing and began doing more nonfiction. But I've always been a reader, and I've always had stories swirling around in my head, so it wasn't a surprise when I decided to try writing my first short story. (I do have to credit my husband for planting the seed, though. One day, kind of out of the blue, he suggested I try my hand at writing a science fiction story. So I did.) That was so addicting, I had to do it again. And again. And pretty soon my short stories were turning into novels, and well, here I am, many novels and shorter stories later, still doing it. I sold my first book to Avalon Books in 1988, and *The Night Prowlers* was published in 1990. It wasn't the first complete novel, I'd written, however. It was the sixth. I'm definitely persistent.

Tell us a bit about your writing process - are you a pantser or a plotter?

Pantser with some plotter tendencies. When I start a new story, I generally know the opening scene and have a pretty good idea where I want the whole thing to go and how it will end. What I don't know is all the stuff in between. So usually, I'll write the first couple of chapters, going on until I realize I don't know what happens next. Then I'll stop, get out a pad and pen and make a list of possible scenes, incidents, plot developments,

etc. I include everything I can think of that might happen in the story, based on the beginning I have and the end I want. I try to go with a few wild and crazy idea, search for the most unlikely and improbably things I can conceive. It surprises me how often those off-the-wall ideas will turn into actual incidents in the plot or at least lead to some interesting twists. Then I take the list and put the incidents in what seems like the most likely order for them to occur. I don't use all of them, and I find that things pop up and occur to me as I'm writing, but that list usually gives me enough ideas and direction to move ahead with the story.

Sounds like your computer programming background resurfacing! What do you like to do when you're not writing?

I like taking long walks, around the neighborhood where I live or in various parks through the city. I love working in the garden when the weather permits. There's something about digging in the earth and encouraging things to grow that feeds my soul. I like watching sports on television, especially baseball, pro football and college basketball. We have a minor league baseball team, and I enjoy going to those games. I like to travel and explore new places.

What is best piece of advice about writing you've ever gotten?

A couple of things. One line from Elmore Leonard has always stuck in my brain: "I leave out the boring parts." The other, and I can't remember where I first heard this, but it's proven very true: "Grow a thick skin." Writing for publication is not for the faint-hearted. It's a guaranteed way to experience more rejection and criticism than you ever guessed you could handle. And if you can't handle it, you're in the wrong business.

Do you have any advice for others just starting out in writing fiction?

It's so easy to publish these days that the market is getting flooded with bad writing. You need to rise above it. Don't put up for sale the first thing you ever wrote, unless you've revised and re-edited several times. Get at least one reader or critique partner you trust and don't send out anything until they've read and approved. Finally hire an editor. I spent years as a professional editor myself, but I still hire someone to go through my independently published books before I put them up for sale. It takes at least one other set of eyes to see problems of consistency, usage, grammar, etc. You're too close to it to see all the problems.

This is such sound advice, Karen. What's next for you?

I'm currently working on the sequel to *A Gift for Murder*, tentatively titled *Wired for Murder*. It's almost 2/3 done, but it's taken me a long time due to life issues intervening and gobbling up my time.

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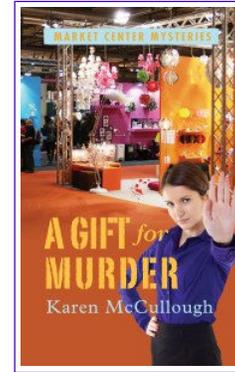


I love the title for the sequel. Thanks for stopping by at 'Expression Express'. Here's more about Karen and her latest book:

Bio:

Karen McCullough is the author of a dozen published novels and novellas in the mystery, romantic suspense, and fantasy genres and has won numerous awards, including an Eppie Award for fantasy. She's also been a four-time Eppie finalist, and a finalist in the Prism, Dream Realm, Rising Star, Lories, Scarlett Letter, and Vixen Awards contests. Her short fiction has appeared in several anthologies and numerous small press publications in the fantasy, science fiction, and romance genres. She has three children, three grandchildren and lives in Greensboro, NC, with her husband of many years.

Website: <http://www.kmccullough.com>
 Blog: <http://www.kmccullough/kblog>
 Twitter: <https://twitter.com/kgmccullough>



Blurb: *A Question of Fire*

When Catherine Bennett agrees to attend an important party as a favor for her boss, she knows she won't enjoy it, but she doesn't expect to end up holding a dying man in her arms. Nor did she anticipate she'd become the recipient of his last message about the location of evidence that would prove his brother innocent of murder. Now the killers are after her to get that information. She'll need the help of attorney Peter Lowell, as well as the victim's difficult, prickly younger brother and a handsome private detective to help her find the evidence before the killers do.

Buy links:

- Kindle: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B002W5RBZS>
- Nook: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/a-question-of-fire-karen-mccullough/1004338298?ean=2940012198129>
- Kobo: <http://www.kobobooks.com/ebook/A-Question-of-Fire/book-UFvwtXQ3UeEPBOnm6ynRA/page1.html>
- Smashwords: <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/43245>
- Order trade paperback from author: <http://www.kmccullough.com/order.php>

And now, more about *25 Years in the Rearview Mirror*

If you enjoy magazine columns and Chicken Soup for the Soul books, you'll probably enjoy our collection of essays designed to warm your heart, raise your spirits and compel you to examine your own life. Get a full listing of authors, essay titles and retailers here: <http://stacyjuba.com/blog/25-years-in-the-rearview-mirror-52-authors-look-back/>

Follow the *25 Years in the Rearview Mirror* Blog and Radio Tour schedule here and enter for some neat 'My Memories Suite' digital scrapbooking software: <http://stacyjuba.com/blog/25-years-in-the-rearview-mirror-blog-tour/>

And don't miss the chance to join the *25 Years in the Rearview Mirror* Yahoo Group, a fun and inspirational group that discusses the past and will help you to stay on track for the future. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/25YearsRearviewMirror/>



Posted by Tracy Krauss at 5:00 AM 
 Labels: [Reads](#) [Reviews](#) and [Interviews](#)

[Recommend this on Google](#)

9 comments:



AUTHORGF

PUBLISHEE





Brandi Boddie October 22, 2012 at 9:45 AM

Nice to meet you, Karen! Congratulations on your most recent book. I'm impressed that you write romantic suspense, mystery, and fantasy :-)

Thanks for the advice on editing and how to make it in the world of independent publishing. I love the many options writers have these days. We may have more control over our work and additional opportunities to publish, but quality is still a must.

Great interview, Tracy!

[Reply](#)



Karen McCullough October 22, 2012 at 1:12 PM

Hi Tracie -- Thanks for having me over to your blog for a visit! I appreciate the hospitality and will return it soon.

Brandi -- Thank you for the kind comments! I love writing in different genres, but I'm pretty sure it's not a great career move. Still, it's necessary for me to keep my writing fresh.

[Reply](#)



Tracy Krauss October 22, 2012 at 5:11 PM

I must apologize to you Karen for misspelling your last name in the original version of this post - in the title no less! I noticed it and fixed it. I noticed you returned the favor by misspelling mine as well in your comment! lol!

[Reply](#)



Maryann Miller October 23, 2012 at 8:12 AM

You're magical, Karen. I just saw you at Donna Fletcher Crow's blog. How do you do that. LOL

[Reply](#)



Karen McCullough October 24, 2012 at 4:12 AM

Hi Maryann -- Ah, but it's magic. Can't tell all my secrets!

[Reply](#)



Karen McCullough October 24, 2012 at 4:14 AM

Eek, Tracy; you're right I did. Sorry. Can't edit the comment, but I did try to spell it right here.

[Reply](#)



Tracy Krauss October 24, 2012 at 7:48 PM

Must be the spelling gremlins, Karin

[Reply](#)



Stacy Juba October 30, 2012 at 5:35 AM

Thanks, Tracy and Karen, for this great post on the blog tour! I've got it shared on Pinterest and scheduled on Facebook and Twitter.

[Reply](#)



William Kendall October 30, 2012 at 12:41 PM

Splendid interview, Tracy!

Karen, nice to meet you!

[Reply](#)

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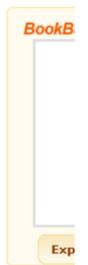
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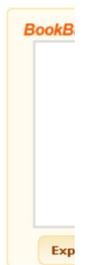
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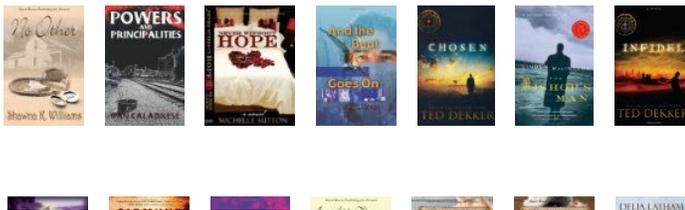
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[Goodreads reviews for Play It Again](#)



GET YOUR OWN SHELF

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LOOKS ARE DECEIVING

Looks Are Deceiving

WIND OVER MARSHDALE - a small prairie town is seems

Guess The Word/Phrase

Hint: Canadian prairie province

Bad Guesses:

Guess the next letter

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z						

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POPULAR POSTS



Celebrate - a CW Blog Chain post

July is a month to celebrate for many people, especially here in North America. In Canada, where I am from, our annual birthday celebratio...



Cutting Edge Words

Today I am thrilled to feature a guest post by friend and writer Marnie Pohlmann. Marnie heads up our local 'Peace Christian Writers' grou...

Blue Christmas - an Inscribe Post

Today was my regularly scheduled post at Inscribe Writers Online - a group of writers who belong to 'Inscribe Christian Writers Fellowship'...

Last week's links - Queen City Quill

Some lovely links to share from the past week! Interview at 'Queen City Quill' - check it out and leave a comment!

EVOLUTIONARY CONSPIRACY OR CREATIONIST HOAX?



Are You a Writing Chameleon?

Chameleons are often used as a metaphor for people who are two faced, can't make up their minds, or seem to change their personality dependi...



The Little Engine that Could - guest post by Lynn Dove

It is my honor to have Lynn Dove as my guest today. I met Lynn in person this past September, but I feel like we've been friends for y...

Danger At the Door - a Review

Danger At The Door by Michelle Sutton had just the right mix of suspense, romance and 'steam'. As someone who doesn't normally read a lot ...



First Response

I did lots of reading over the Christmas break and will be posting reviews over the next few weeks. Here is my review of First Response by ...



A Blazing Valentine Book - Burning Hearts

Here's a super Valentine's treat - a feature interview with author Nike Chillemi about her book BURNING HEARTS. TK: Burning Hearts is s...



What Birth Order Has to Do With Writing

I'm fascinated by personality analysis and always enjoy looking into different theories about personality. What makes people think, act, an...

VIDEO TRAILERS

- [AND THE BEAT GOES ON video trailer](#)
- [MY MOTHER THE MAN-EATER video trailer](#)
- [PLAY IT AGAIN video trailer](#)
- [WIND OVER MARSHDALE video trailer](#)

Evolutionary Conspiracy or Creati
An archeologist's find causes a firestorm of ske and murder. Can he unlock the truth?

Guess The Word/Phrase

Hint: the main character

Bad Guesses:

Guess the next letter

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z						

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HUNTING NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD

Hunting Never Looked So Good

A cougar's search for love keeps getting foiled as she keeps falling for one of her grown daughters instead.

Guess The Word/Phrase

Hint: main character

Bad Guesses:

Guess the next letter

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z						

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POLAR OPPOSITES - IRRESISTABLE ATTRACTION

Polar Opposites - Irresistible Attraction
Sparks fly when an ex-rock and roll junkie and
rendezvous at a local resort, but neither are preoccupied with
emotional complications or the danger from the

Guess The Word/Phrase

Hint: Deanie's father Jack does this for a living

Bad Guesses:

Guess the next letter

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z						

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