

AN INTERVIEW SERIES

"THE AUTHOR IS"

— PRESENTED BY —

RITA AWARD WINNING AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MOLLY O'KEEFE



THE AUTHOR IS... Interview with Brenda Novak

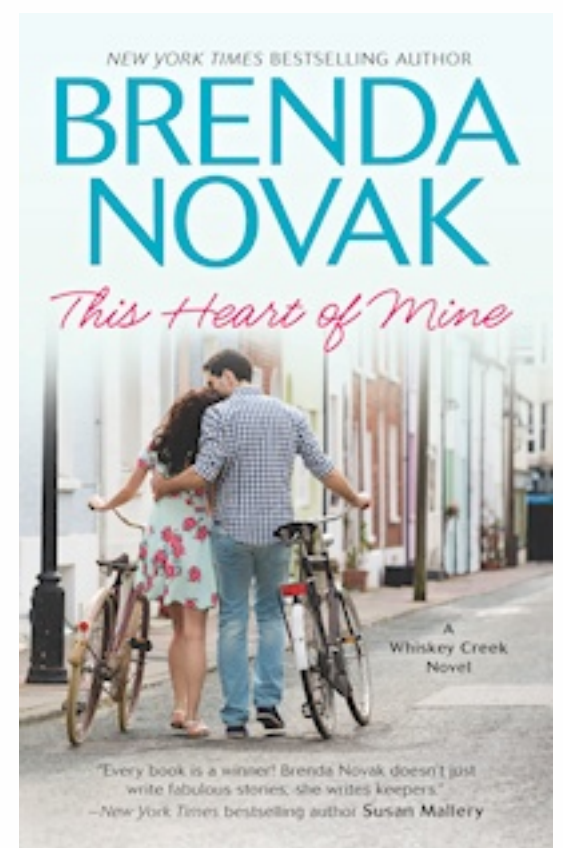
Because of alphabetical seating I've had the incredible good fortune to sit beside Brenda Novak at RWA and RT booksignings (only when it's a slow M year, I guess). She is a writer whose work in the Harlequin Superromance line I've always admired and she has only gone on to do bigger and brighter things in all sorts of genres. Her efforts on behalf of Juvenile Diabetes research has made over 2.4 million dollars. She's undeniably classy and consistently putting out great books.

The story of how you started writing has become a bit of romance-writer legend, but when I think of the shock of finding your babysitter drugging your youngest so he would nap, followed by the way you turned your life upside down in order to stay home with your kids — I can't imagine how stressful that was! Did you start writing right away? How did you find the time? How long did it take you to write your first book? Do you remember any of those days, or are they all a blur?

I started *reading* right away. I'd quit my job, so I was home with the kids but had other problems. My husband's business was failing. I needed to help keep a roof over our heads, and yet I couldn't trust anyone else to watch my kids. So when they napped, I'd escape into a good book to carry me away from the stress and worry. I remember I was reading Jude Deveraux's KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR (and loving it) when I first got the idea that maybe *I* could write a novel. After all, it was something I could do from home, with the kids, so I decided to give it a shot and started just a month or so later. It wasn't the quick fix I'd hoped for, however. It took me five years (during which I had two more kids) to research the Victorian era, where the book was set, and teach myself the craft of writing. We lost our business, our house and just about everything else during that period. But writing kept me sane and hopeful during a dark time, and I was fortunate enough to sell that story to HarperCollins when I finished it. OF NOBLE BIRTH came out in November of 1999.

You have written a little bit of everything, were your shifts from category to romantic suspense to historical romance to single title contemporary romance driven by market changes or by the kind of story you wanted to tell? What do you think of first? Plot and premise or characters? How much time do you spend thinking/planning versus actually writing?

You're right! I've written several sub-genres of romance and love them all. I'm an



Whiskey Creek Series #8



eclectic reader so I tend to be an eclectic writer and get ideas for all different types of books. But some of my genre changes *were* driven by the market, so it's really been a combination. I started out writing historicals. Then I was "orphaned" when Harper merged with Avon in 1999 and fired their own romance editors. This happened just before my first book came out. I was cast adrift at the same time my editor was. Fortunately, I had already met Paula Eykelhof at Harlequin at a small regional conference where I pitched her a contemporary story (at that time she was Executive Editor of Harlequin's Superromance line), and she'd purchased it from me. When I made that deal, I thought I'd be writing two genres for two different publishers, but then I lost my slot at Harper in the merger, so I just segued into writing for Superromance full-time.



For a number of years, Paula was buying everything I could produce, but I had some stories in my head that didn't quite fit the Superromance line. They were bigger in scope, a bit grittier and had too much suspense in them. So I wrote TAKING THE HEAT, even though it was contracted as a Superromance on the hope that she'd see it for the single title that it was, and she did! She convinced Harlequin to make it a single title release, and began passing it around the publishing house for opinions. The marketing department got really excited about the story, so they invited me to speak at sales conference, and Harlequin bought quite a bit more single title romantic suspense stories from me. Then the romantic suspense market began to contract, so I suggested going back to my contemporary romance roots (from Superromance days) and starting a long-running series like the Whiskey Creek series I'm writing now.



Incidentally, I haven't lost my love for suspense. I've recently sold four books to St. Martin's that will begin a new series for me, which I will be writing concurrently with more Whiskey Creek books and some trade paper women's fiction for Harlequin.

The suspense series for SMP is Hanover House Chronicles — that cover is AMAZING!!

I'm really excited about my new suspense series, which will begin coming out from St. Martin's Press in 2016. The Hanover House Chronicles feature Evelyn Talbot, a psychiatrist who is determined to unlock the secrets of the psychopathic mind. She's established a new and rather unusual high-security facility in the remote outpost of Hilltop, Alaska, where she studies the worst of the worst—and in such a cold and lonely place, a lot could go wrong. So it's a good thing she's got a handsome Alaskan State Trooper in town to keep her company. She feels a strong attraction to him, but in order to act on it she must overcome the trauma that prompted her to make fighting psychopathy her life's work.

The research for this series has been fascinating. I'm really excited to see how my readers respond to it.

You have raised over 2.4 million dollars for Juvenile Diabetes Research, through your auction and now your digital anthologies! And COOKBOOK!! Tell me what made you decide to write a cookbook? How fun was that?

LOVE THAT! Brenda Novak's Every Occasion Cookbook has been a huge challenge, several years in the making, but a labor of love. It's a completely different project than writing a book. Just the staging and photography alone take up considerable time. But I wanted to compile all of my healthiest recipes, the ones that I used while raising my big, boisterous family, in case other families, who are also hoping to eat a bit healthier, might benefit from it. It's definitely not an extreme approach to low-carb eating. It's very moderate and accessible, so it's good even for people who don't have anyone with diabetes in the family. I just made the cinnamon orange cookies last night, and they were delicious!

I love to hear the stories authors have about their least favorite books, the ones — that for whatever reason caused the most problems. What book was like that for you?

Hmm...I'm trying to think of one. The "easy" ones come more readily to mind, probably because there are fewer of those. LOL Some of those would include my Stillwater Trilogy (DEAD SILENCE, DEAD GIVEAWAY & DEAD RIGHT), INSIDE and A HOME OF HER OWN. Probably the easiest book so far would be THIS HEART OF MINE, which will be out March 31st. That book just poured out, and I think it's one of my best. But my least favorite book? I guess that would have to be EXPECTATIONS, my very first contemporary romance. I really didn't know what I was doing when I set out to write that book. I'd anticipated writing only historicals and hadn't read many contemporaries. I was sort of feeling my way, trying to figure it out as I went along.

I have some reader questions for you:

Eileen Aberman Wells: Which genre do you like to write best? Do you see an end to Whiskey Creek? (I hope not!)

I honestly can't pick a favorite. Some days I'm more in the mood to write a touching contemporary romance than a nail-biting thriller. Other times, I prefer the unusual setting and customs I get to explore in a historical. The suspense books are probably more difficult, because of the puzzle in addition to the romance running through them--although the research is more intense for the historicals. So, I guess each presents its own challenges and rewards.

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Fortunately, I don't yet see an end to Whiskey Creek. I'm hoping I get to write at least another 6 - 8 books for that series. (So glad you're enjoying them! :-))

Emily Wesley Wheeler: Will Joe Demarco get his story told, and will he and Kyle be the last people to have their stories told in Whiskey Creek or is there more to come?

I am finishing Kyle's story this week. It's called A WINTER WEDDING and will be out next November. Joe will definitely get a story. So will the rest of the Amos Brothers. That means more to come!!

And finally — fill in the blank...

The Author Is... happy she gets to do what she loves for a living. :-)

If you'd like to know more about Brenda check out her website www.brendanovak.com and if you'd like to know more about the **SWEET TALK** anthology that I am so lucky to be a part of with Brenda and a whole whack of great authors check out [our facebook party!](#)

If you would like the chance to win a copy of Brenda's WHEN LIGHTENING STRIKES let me know what you thought of the interview by dropping me a line at molly@molly-okeefe.com or on [my facebook page](#) And while you're there let me know — what are you DYING to ask my next guest — the amazing Nalini Singh!

Thanks for reading!!

Molly

The Boys of Bishop are HERE!

Wild Child

Never Been Kissed

Between The Sheets

Indecent Proposal — OUT NOW!

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