

Crescent City author isn't stumbling at all

September 10, 2019



Susan Tietjen of Crescent City knew she had wanted to write all her life. With her latest novel, “Grace Without Grace: Stumbling Into Romance,” having just gone live on Sept. 6, Tietjen has come a long way since she finished her first novel as a fifth-grader.

But listening to the stories her mom used to tell, Tietjen actually wrote her first book when she was just 3 years old.

“She told me when I finally got married that she had this box of stuff she kept of things I didn’t know she had, which were little stories I’d written and given to her. One of them was from when I was 3, with lots of scribbles, a couple different colors of Crayon, especially yellow. She said that was my first book.”

Her mother recalled her daughter having a fit when her mom put the book away after having it taped to the refrigerator for a while. “So, she asked me to tell her about it,” said Tittjen. “I was able to tell her the original story almost word for word, as I told it from the picture the first time I gave it to her. ‘That just told me you really loved that sort of thing,’ she said.”

Tietjen struggled for years to make her first love work for her, then had to give it up. After five children and a marriage that didn't pan out, she entered nursing school. "I had to step away from what I loved to do, to raise the family. Now, I have the time to do what I love to do."

Twenty-six years later, she and her second husband, Richard, have retired to Crescent City. Originally from Lancaster, California, Tietjen followed her parents, who decided to retire here many years ago.

"I used to come here all the time with the family for vacations and holidays, loved it and decided that we'd love to retire here," she said.

Tietjen actually wrote her first book prior to retirement, a fantasy novel in a planned trilogy, "Dragon Unchained." She's working on the sequel, "Dragons Infernal."

Following retirement, she finished her second official book, a historical romance, "Saving Lord Whitton's Daughter: A Regency Romance Novel."

Tietjen said she decided to publish her novels independently. "I'm a little bit on the older side, so for me being traditionally published is what you're supposed to do. But more and more people are getting interested in 'indie' publishing, because the Internet is so readily available and sharing with others your story is such a wonderful thing, whether you're the person receiving it or the person putting it out there."

She said doing so ultimately gave her more control over her work and the opportunity to make more money.

Tietjen said she was helped by joining a writing group. "My first book took quite a while, but I had to go through a writing group so they could tear it apart and put it back together again. They kept me inspired to keep going.

"After trying traditional publishing for over a year and a half, a friend who was extremely successful in indie publishing gave me some information to jump-start mine. It's not easy, or for the faint-hearted. And it's not free, because you're taking on some of the responsibilities of a publishing house," she said.

Tietjen joined that first writing group in 2007. She currently belongs to three, including one in Crescent City, which took the summer off. A writing group can help with awareness of new laws, rules and regulations, what to watch out for, who to work with (like a cover artist) and how to get an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) bar code on the back of book, Tietjen said.

She calls her latest book, "Grace Without Grace," a romantic comedy. "The main character, Grace, has no grace, and has given up on any kind of a romantic relationship. She, for me, was the voice of those who are sometimes belittled or picked on because they're different," Tietjen said.

Grace tries to rekindle a romance five years after walking away from the relationship. It's a tale that is not age-specific, so it should appeal to virtually anybody, said Tietjen.

"It was fun to write. This one had more things based on experiences in my own life and input others gave me, accidents that made them feel stupid.

“I even have a granddaughter who told me she had gone to sit on a chair in class and while talking to somebody, didn’t notice that somehow the chair had moved. So she missed it and landed on the floor.

“People came running over to see if she was okay. She told them, ‘I’m fine. The floor just had something it wanted to tell me.’ And I thought that was cute. She made light of an embarrassing situation. A version of that is in the book.”

She added that her husband has been very supportive of her new career. “Although sometimes he finds it hard to be supportive, like, ‘Why isn’t that book done yet? By the way, can we go walk the beach?’

“However, he’s far more likely to tell people about my writing than I am. I tend to be shy,” she said.

“Grace Without Grace” will get a marketing push through the website Lovingthebook.com. It will expose the book around the world, including Great Britain, Australia and India, with a weeklong book tour, bloggers and readers giving opinions, and reviews online, like at Amazon.com.

Not that writing is all Tietjen does. She said she enjoys gardening - hoping she inherited her mother’s two green thumbs - and knitting. She even submitted her first-ever crocheted tablecloth and took best in show at the 2019 Del Norte County Fair. And she’s a member of the Crescent City Fuchsia Club.

Not surprisingly, she’s an avid reader, of such diverse authors as Ann McCaffery, Robin Hubb, Juliet Marillier, James Patterson, Dean Koontz and romance author Cindy Roland Anderson. “Hers are funny as heck,” she noted.

Her advice to aspiring writers: “I meet people all the time who tell me they have such marvelous ideas but aren’t sure how to get it on paper. If they’ve given me samples, I’m very saddened at how many of our younger people honestly don’t know how to write correctly, from punctuation to verb tenses.

“But the ones who are really good, and know they’re really good, I encourage them to take creative-writing classes. Get involved with a magazine like ‘The Writer Magazine.’ Get good ideas. Enter contests. Get feedback.

“Submit to an editor and see if they’ll accept you and work with you. Decide if you’re going to be traditional or indie. And If you select indie, commit to excellence!”