

talks to noir! patricia haley

The past few years have witnessed a meteoric rise in the popularity of Christian fiction. Christian author Patricia Haley recently spoke with *Noir's* Judy Thomas about the challenges and rewards of writing for a genre that is exploding in popularity, and how she stays inspired.

By Judy Thomas



Photo courtesy of Patricia Haley

IT HAS BEEN SAID that people teach what they have to learn. Christian Fiction author Patricia Haley

put a new spin on this concept by penning what she “wanted to read, and couldn’t find.” “There is such a void in the area of modern day fiction, that’s void of profanity and sex,” she explained when I talked with her recently, “but has an entertaining message, and gives God glory.”

Apparently, it was what others wanted to read as well. When Haley self-published her first novel in 1998, *Nobody’s Perfect*, it sold nearly 20,000 copies. Since her debut on the literary scene six years ago, she has had two additional books published by BET Books, *No Regrets* and *Blind Faith*, and contributed to a Christian Fiction anthology entitled *Blessed Assurance*.

In speaking with Haley, it’s clear her convictions are not confined to the page. Although Contemporary African-American Christian fiction is a relatively new genre, she said she never doubted the outcome of her faith-based writings, and is “grateful to God” for her good fortune. “When I look back now,” she said of her writing, “I know it was the leading of the Lord.”

When she is not expressing her truth through Christian fiction, Haley works as a project manager. She is also an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. In a telephone interview in February, I asked her about her craft and its challenges and rewards.

n!: Has your technical background in engineering contributed to your literary success?



PH: I'm a very methodical person. The technical background enables me to have structure in my writing. When I first start a story, I have an outline...

n!: Your first book was self-published. How difficult was it to have the second one published?

PH: The first one did extremely well.

The book came out in July. By December, we had sold over 10,000 copies. You start to pick up the attention of publishers and agents. We got a call from the

William Morris Agency, which is phenomenal. Back in 1998, self-publishing still wasn't a big thing. It was your entrée into the market, and enabled you to get some exposure. That agent then went out and started looking for publishers for my next book.

N!: Who were some of your favorite authors growing up?

PH: My favorite author was Maya Angelou. *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* was a monumental book

for me. [It spoke of] a young African-American character close to my age that I could identify with.

n!: Did you ever meet her?

PH: Yes, it wasn't even on the writing circuit. I was getting ready to go out of a turnstile (in a hotel in Atlanta.) She's very friendly.

n!: Do the proceeds from your books go to religious organizations? What particular causes do you support the most?

PH: I'm a tither, I give back to the Lord through the church. I support New Covenant Church in Trooper, PA, and Dominion Christian Center in Rockford, IL.

n!: What religious writers inspire you, both living and dead?

PH: Frank Peretti is one of my favorites... His books really inspired me, first of all, even

to be aware that there was Christian fiction...but now I read Francine Rivers and T. Davis Bunn.



interview

n!: Is the illness factor in *No Regrets* indicative of other problems? Is it, like it is used in the Old Testament, symbolic, or the physical manifestation of another problem, spiritual or other?

PH: Absolutely...it could be the manifestation of some unresolved guilt, or definitely, particularly for Karen, such a move away from her savior. In her early years, she had adopted the Lord. [There was] a void in her spirit, so to speak. She has so many inner emotions, hurt, issues that were never resolved, in this cancer that is going away and coming back. She just doesn't have the faith or inner connection to deal with it. She gives up because she doesn't have any hope, she doesn't have any faith.

N!: Do modern Christian writings, based on biblical principles or stories, indicate that we are still dealing with the same issues they were dealing with in Christ's time? How relevant are his teachings to what we encounter in today's world?

PH: Absolutely, we're dealing with the same issues. The Bible says there's nothing new under the sun...[one] can identify with it, and go back and reference it.

N!: You cover a lot of tough topics: severe illness, faith, dating morality, interracial dating and racial harassment. Have you had to deal with any of these issues in your own life? How has your faith strengthened you, and helped you to endure difficult situations?

PH: I would say with illness, friends and family have had various forms of cancer and terminal illnesses. I've definitely had exposure to that.

Managing your own hurt, or the feeling that comes with that, requires faith...All my books deal with issues. I want to...present the issues, and an outcome that gives an individual hope. That's where I am able to glorify God...Even in the midst of dire situations, there's hope. That's the ultimate message I have in all my books.

For more information about Patricia Haley, please visit her website at: www.patriciahaley.com

Judy Thomas has published articles with several Pennsylvania publications: Main Line Life, The Daily Times, and Voices of Central Pennsylvania.

