

Readin' & Writin' With Lauraine- August 2006



Have I ever mentioned that I love books? Probably once or twice, I suppose. But I do. I love the look of them on the shelves, to take one of them off, browse the cover copy, read the opening lines, smell the ink, and enjoy the layout. I love books. Good thing since I write them but my love of books began way back when with a toddler's plea, "read to me." I love picture books, both those for children and the coffee table variety for adults. Old books have a charm of their own, all containing words that carry me away to another world.

The novel I chose for this month is definitely of another world, at least another part of our world. Allah's Fire by Chuck Holton and Gayle Roper, is book one in a series titled Task Force Valor. As Mark Mynheir, a former Marine, commented, "Allah's Fire sizzles with an intensity from page one right on through to the dramatic conclusion. Military suspense, radical Islam, unexpected romance and the grace of God all collide into an amazing story." I couldn't agree more. What happens when a new and undetectable explosive is discovered? One that could destroy the whole world one base or airplane at a time. Is there a team in place to destroy the destroyer? Can the love between two sisters save the one kidnaped by extremists? And where in a world at war is there room for love to grow between a besieged soldier and female journalist?

Allah's Fire gave me a window to see into a society that views life in a far different way than I do. Learning new things through a well told story is one of my favorite ways to gain new knowledge be it political, social, medical, adventure, technical, or spiritual. A well read person has absorbed knowledge usually beyond their own awareness.

Transmitting knowledge is a job of writers, to make everything they write accurate, no matter if it is fiction or nonfiction. You can't just make everything up if you are writing a novel. Facts need to be checked, for even if you create an entire new world, things must be cohesive from front to back. All this takes research; online, through books and magazines, videos, movies, by talking to people of expertise, studying pictures, and my favorite way—going there. There are details you might not know to ask about until you've seen, heard, smelled, and touched them yourself. How does the wind feel on your face in winter versus summer? What vegetation grows where you put the story? Can you describe the smell of tide flats without having been there? The song of a lark in the morning, the softness of May air in Kentucky, far different than our air here in California. The words, "I am a writer" will open up doors for you to learn all you need to know and then some. People love to talk about what they know and do, so ask. Ask politely with regard to their time, being well prepared yourself, ask your questions and let them talk. I use a small tape recorder to make sure I'm accurate and I always ask for permission to use it.

When you create a story, you create a world of your own, no matter the period or the genre. You invite the reader in to share your world and the characters moving and living in it. Even though you think you know that world well, take the time to look at it through your visitor's eyes and make sure you do your research. Your readers will appreciate your diligence and hopefully you won't get any letters from readers saying, "Did you know there is an error on page 292?" I've had my share of those no matter how hard my editors and I try to make sure all is accurate.

I hope your summer is going well, and you are taking time to read and enjoy the lazy days of the season. Yeah, right. I know, what world am I living in? Why one I made up, of course. If you'll be in California this summer, be sure to drop by Books and Crannies or the Apple Shed for great reading. Otherwise, check out the local bookstore in your area.

Until next month,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine