

Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- August 2010



The beginning of August brought a random memory to my mind. When I was young, during the “dog days of summer,” some bacteria or small plant or something grew in the lakes and then we could not go swimming. Does this still happen? Any of you remember that? Or is it a Midwest thing? Maybe the fact that we are driving across North Dakota prompted the memory.

Memories are funny things; they pop up when least expected. Which leads me into the book for this month, *Missing Max* by Karen Young. I read her first book, *Blood Bayou*, and in the back of that book was the first chapter of this one. I remembered that teaser and wanted to read it.

Missing Max has a lot to do with memories, as the baby of a family is snatched during Mardi Gras when his older sister momentarily forgets about him in his stroller. When he is not found, the memory of that day nearly destroys her and her family. When other strange things begin to happen, she realizes losing Max is only the beginning. But of what and by whom and why? The mystery starts to unravel when a second kidnapping occurs.

The suspense in this story is a tangible thing, wrapping talons around the heart of the reader. I ached for the mother, the father, the daughter, all attempting to deal with the crushing blow in their own way. Memories are dragged up and gone over with attention

to every detail. Again and again. Stopping to make dinner or even answer the phone is excruciating for the family.

Karen Young writes a keeper of a tale that would be a fine textbook to use by someone wanting to write suspense.

Which brings me to my writing tips for those of you who either are writing, or dream of someday doing so: You can put feet on your writing dream by starting a memory journal in a three-ring binder. Go back through your life in five-year increments and write down lists of your memories. The houses you've lived in are a good trigger. For men, the cars they have owned work well.

With a binder like this, you can add more pages as needed. One memory will trigger another so be prepared to dream of old things. All these memories can become fodder as you apply them to the characters you are creating.

While daily life can seem humdrum, writing these lists can sharpen your observation skills, improve your memory, and help you make wiser decisions because hopefully, we all learn from our mistakes and our successes too.

And perhaps something so vivid has happened in your life, you can base an entire novel on it.

One fun aside on this: if you ever sit down with your siblings and talk about some of your memories, you can bet they'll remember the incident way differently than you do. Which can lead to interesting discussions, or maybe a whole new story line.

Hope you are enjoying your summer, and remember, August is a great month for reading. (As is every other month!) I hope to see you on Facebook or Twitter soon. We have some real surprises coming for you on the web site in September.

Until next time,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine