

The Crime Cafe with Saralyn Richard

Presented By:



Debbi: Hi everyone. Today, making her second visit to the show, is the author of the Detective Oliver Parrott mysteries and other books that we'll be discussing. She's a former educator who's written for children and adults. It's my pleasure to have with me, Saralyn Richard. Hi Saralyn, I'm really happy to see you again.

Saralyn: Thank you, Debbi. And thanks for having me on your show.

Debbi: Sure thing. And by the way, as Fernando would say, you look marvelous darling. You do indeed. I am almost finished with your second Oliver Parrott book. Will you be writing more of those?

Saralyn: I am currently writing the third Oliver Parrott book.

Debbi: Excellent.

Saralyn: Yes, he is still whispering in my ear. So as long as he continues to do that, I'll be recording what he's telling me.

Debbi: Can you give us a hint as to what the book is about?

Saralyn: Well, it's also set in Brandywine Valley and the working title for the book is INHERITANCE BLUES and it has to do with a meth lab and a Ponzi scheme and a really famous old lady whose children have interest in what they're going to inherit from her. And I think it's going to all come together in a really interesting book.

Debbi: Sounds interesting.

Saralyn: So, I've just started with it. It's just in the very beginning stages. I think I've written two chapters.

Debbi: Sounds fascinating.

Saralyn: Thanks.

Debbi: In the latest novel, I noticed that Oliver's wife, Tonya, makes an appearance and she has served with the military and come back from deployment and has PTSD. Did you do a lot of research on that topic?

Saralyn: Yes, I did. And Tonya was an important character in the first book as well, but she was still doing her tour of duty in Afghanistan. So she couldn't be as big of a part of the picture as she was in A PALETTE FOR LOVE AND MURDER. There, she's really right up there with the main characters and her PTSD takes front and center spot and becomes a big part of the plot. So I don't know how far along you are, but it's super relevant to what Parrott is investigating.

Debbi: I'm pretty far along. So I think I know what you're saying.

Saralyn: Okay.

Debbi: She's a very interesting character and I liked the way you handled that issue. I do hope you write ... yeah. I was hopeful that you would write a third one because if the first book was great for gourmands, the second one made me want to take up art.

Saralyn: Well, the Brandywine Valley, which is located outside of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, is just full of subjects to write about. And the first book really involved the horse community there, and they're avid horsemen who ride, they show, they do fox hunting, they do lots and lots of horse activities and it's a horse community. And then there's the art community. And you may have heard of Andrew Wyeth and his family. The Wyeths are a big part of the art community in Brandywine Valley. There's a museum there called the Brandywine River Museum of Fine Arts. And it features a lot of the artists that live there, but a lot of the Wyeths are featured there.

Saralyn: So there's a big art community in Brandywine Valley. The light is beautiful, the country is beautiful. It's a great place to paint, especially landscapes. And so I wanted the second book, *A PALETTE FOR LOVE AND MURDER* to involve that art community. And now the third book, as I told you is going to be something different. So I'm trying to paint a picture of this community that is just absolutely exquisite. It's peaceful, it's gorgeous, it's wholesome and it's the last place you would expect a murder to take place. So I'm really fascinated with that as a setting. And I have to say that the people who live there and work there have opened up their minds and their hearts to me, and they have shared a lot with me and they've really made me feel like I'm a member of the community. So I do a lot of research, I've made a lot of friends there and it's just the greatest place to write about.

Debbi: Wow, that's really interesting because you're located in Texas. Am I right?

Saralyn: That's right.

Debbi: So it's fascinating your interest in this particular community and the way they've opened up to you. You must've done quite a bit of research for that.

Saralyn: Well, I have a family member that lives there and so I have visited there many times and that's really how things got started. I went to a party like the party in *MURDER IN THE ONE PERCENT*. It was a really fancy, elegant, fabulous party. And that's when I got the first idea that this would be a great setting for a murder mystery, because you would just not expect a murder to take place in a setting like this. And since that time, I've met people. I talk about *The Hunt Magazine*, in both of the books, I have mentioned *The Hunt Magazine* and that is the big local magazine for the area and the people who work for that magazine, the staff and all of the editors and so on have invited me to some of their events, they have shared their magazine with me and I get a lot of research from their magazines too. So it's just really wonderful.

Debbi: It is. That's fantastic. Let's see. What about your latest book? Your latest book is called *A MURDER OF PRINCIPAL*. What is this book about?

Saralyn: Well, that's a standalone mystery and it takes place in a large urban high school. And it starts off when a new principal has been hired from the outside to bring in change. And nobody, no institutions like change, but schools are especially notorious for resisting change. So this maverick principal comes in and he's got all these grand ideas about student-centered change and he meets with resistance from every corner. So there are teachers, there are students, there

are faculty association personnel, there are gangs in the area, there's sexual harassment issues, there's grievances against him, and he has to face all of these things and also a murder.

Debbi: It's interesting because it's such a different setting than the Brandywine Valley mysteries. And you tackle some tough issues in a rather fearless way, I think.

Saralyn: Well, really, A MURDER OF PRINCIPAL is my most personal book that I've written so far, because I spent a couple of decades in urban high schools and I had to do the least amount of research for that book because I lived all of those issues and I always had it in my mind to write about them in a way that would be fictional, that would be fun, that would be quirky, there would be quirky characters, but underneath it all are some very real social issues that a school must go through, must deal with. And a school is just a microcosm of society at large. So all of the problems and jealousies and competitions and social problems, those are all in the school, too. And there's a lot of drama that takes place in school every single day. I'm a little surprised that more people don't set their books in schools because the school is just a rich environment for stories. As I like to say, there are a million stories beyond the flagpole. So I tried to tap into those in A MURDER OF PRINCIPAL.

Debbi: Yes. That's absolutely true what you're saying about schools. I've seen it in books set in universities, too. Colleges, universities, same kind of thing. It's a community, it's like a small town, it's all of what you're saying. Yeah. But all of those issues are there in microcosm. Wow. So this will be a standalone then?

Saralyn: Yes.

Debbi: And you also have another book called BAD BLOOD SISTERS?

Saralyn: Right. That will be coming out in March. And that's also a standalone and it's a mystery thriller. So it's the first time I've really dabbled into writing a thriller. And it's also the first book that I've written that is written entirely from a single point of view. So I wanted to stretch myself as a writer and I wanted to tackle that. And I had a lot of fun doing that, the main character is somebody that I really identify with and by the end of the book, so many of the things that happened to her in this book, they happened to me, not that they did in real life, but as I wrote the book, they were happening to me and sometimes I was feeling pretty uncomfortable.

Debbi: Wow. So this is a first person perspective in a thriller.

Saralyn: It's not written in first person point of view, it's in third person deep point of view. But every single chapter, every single scene is written from this one main character's point of view.

Debbi: Interesting. And it's a thriller. Wow. Also a standalone, I take it.

Saralyn: Right. And it'll be out in March.

Debbi: Right. It'll be out in March. Okay. And you're now working on the third Oliver Parrott, so good. Good, good, good, all good. And what are you reading that you'd recommend?

Saralyn: Well, let's see. I have so many books here that I've been reading. Just for fun I picked up Mary Higgins Clark book because sometimes I relax with her books. They're just quick and easy

to read and I love to see the way she writes. And I know I can expect something light when I pick up a Mary Higgins Clark book. So I'm in the middle of that right now. I just read as a review for a book that's coming out about another book that takes place in a school called THOUGHTS & PRAYERS. And that book deals with the very difficult topic of school shootings. And that was an extremely moving book for me and gripping. And that too, I think is an important book for people to read. Even if it's not a subject that that one might run to, it's got some fabulous messages for people. I just think it's a great book.

Debbi: THOUGHTS & PRAYERS.

Saralyn: THOUGHTS & PRAYERS.

Debbi: Yeah. That is another very timely and important topic. What are your hobbies other than reading?

Saralyn: Reading and writing are my two most important hobbies, especially with the pandemic going on. But I also love, I live in a beach town, I live on an island and so I love walking on the beach, I love being out in nature, I love gardening, I love cooking, I love games, especially word games, I play a lot of those. I do puzzles. I don't have a lot of spare time, but when I do have spare time, I'm doing one of those things. And I also have two dogs and one of them is an Old English Sheepdog. And my very first book was about her. You can see it in the back there. She has become famous in the local area. Before the pandemic, we went around to schools and parades and all kinds of events with her and she's the tourism ambassador dog for our city. So that is also a very big hobby that my husband and I have of showing her, taking her. And she's really almost a service job to kids. She bonds with kids, she just radiates when she's around kids. And the pandemic has been very hard on her.

Debbi: She likes being around people.

Saralyn: Right, right. She's an adored dog. In a way she reminds me of Miss Piggy, but there's nothing obnoxious about her, she's just really fluffy and fun.

Debbi: That's great. Do you have anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

Saralyn: Well, I just love this whole writers adventure and I love talking to you, Debbi. This is my second time on, but I feel like we're friends and it's just so easy to talk to you and you have such good questions. So thank you for having me, thank you for being part of the writer adventure and thank you to everyone who's listening, thank you too and I'll see you in the books.

Debbi: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate it. With that, I will just add that we are Patreon supported, and I'm also participating in a fundraiser for the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation. You can find the link to my fundraiser page below this video and below the podcast in the show notes. Dystonia, as I may have mentioned is the third, most common movement disorder after Parkinson's and tremors. And so many medical professionals don't even know about it or have never heard of it. So treatments and a full understanding of the condition are essential. I have dystonia so that's my personal stake in this. In any case, do check it out. And meanwhile, I'll see you in two weeks when my next guest will be Steven Max Russo. Take care in the meantime and happy reading.