

The Crime Cafe with Sandra Wells

Presented By:



Debbi: Hi everyone. Before we get started, I want to thank everyone who participated in the DMRF's Virtual Zoo Day on September 25th. They include Sharon Anderson, Santina Caruso, Robert Chamness, Carolyn Chun, Marlena Cook, Scott Davis, Paul Downie, Eirlys Evans, Eric Flint, Rip and Denise Gardner, NM, Kenneth MacClune, Kathy Owens Hankins, Connie Ridgway, Sarah Sensory and Brandy Yassa. Thank you so much for participating and being on my DMRF Dystonia team. I really, really appreciate it. DMV Dystonia, that was the name of the team.

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Debbi: In any event, today we have with us, an author who began writing in March of 2020 and has produced six novels and a children's short story since last year. She lives in Saint Clair, Tennessee, enjoys photography and is searching for the perfect barn picture in the Tennessee and North Carolina areas. Our guest today is Sandra Wells. Hi Sandra. Good to see you.

Sandra: Hi. Thank you for having me on.

Debbi: Sure thing. No problem.

Sandra: The Halloween story is not so much of a kid's Halloween story, it's pretty out there. I wouldn't recommend to read it to kids.

Debbi: Huh. You've written six books in less than two years. In my book, that's pretty impressive and I've always been amazed with people who can crank stuff out like that. How do you stay so consistently productive?

Sandra: I started writing when I was 59, when I turned 59, on a bet with a friend of mine. Her father and mother... her name is Valerie Bloom, were authors and she bet me that I couldn't write a book. So I had to take her up on it and I wrote my first book and I just haven't stopped. Now every two and a half months I could turn one out. I may get tired of it and slack off here, but not so far. I write everything using my cell phone, only my cell phone.

Debbi: I noticed.

Sandra: That worked out good, because no matter where I'm at, if I have a thought then I've got my cell phone with me.

Debbi: That was my thinking. I was going to ask you about that. Do you have any kind of writing schedule, though, that you keep? Are there times that you set aside specifically for writing?

Sandra: No, I don't have any kind of method to my madness. I was talking to some of the writers that... they have to have certain music playing, drinking a half a glass of wine, standing in a mud puddle, or something, with bats hanging around them. There are all

kind of off-the-wall stuff I've heard, but no method to my madness. It's just whatever. I think of something and it's like, "Oh, well let's put that down."

Debbi: Wow.

Sandra: About two and a half, three hours a day I'd say.

Debbi: How do you keep track of the development of your plot?

Sandra: I start the book and, I'm being honest with you, I don't have a clue where it's going and how it develops as it goes.

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Debbi: You amaze me!

Sandra: What I do is; every time I stop writing for the day, I email it to myself so I'll have a backup, because I've always worried about that. So, I've got like 40 emails with the book at different stages.

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Debbi: This is really interesting. I've never attempted to write a novel on a cell phone, but listening to your method, that's extremely interesting. Have you ever considered writing screenplays?

Sandra: People told me that my book, *The Clock Struck Midnight* should be a screenplay and it's selling really well and people really liked it. It's about a lady that moves to the Ocracoke Island on the Outer Banks, North Carolina, and buys a bar. I don't want to give the whole story away, but the ghost of Blackbeard pops to the bar and he gives her all kind of hell and there's all kinds of stuff going on and everybody really loves the book. They told me that should be one, but I've never really actually sat down and tried to write a screenplay, no. I don't think I'd have a clue how to do it.

Debbi: I have a funny feeling that you would probably take to it if you studied the form, because writing in chunks like that and then sending it to yourself, that seems very screenplay writing to me. Finding those moments, you know what I mean? That you just got to get down.

Sandra: It's just the way I started doing it. And I don't ever print it out or anything like that. I just write the book and then I go back to the beginning and I go through it once more and make any changes I want to, and then send it off to the publishers.

Debbi: Who is your publisher?

Sandra: I have one right now, it's called St. Clair Publishing. He is in McMinnville, Tennessee, and his name is Stan St. Clair and he's a really nice publisher. I started out with a different publisher. That didn't work out. They made a lot of promises and had a lot of plans. They just didn't know how to make them happen.

Debbi: Hmm, I am familiar with that.

Sandra: I bet you are. I self-published my last book. I just had one called *One Cent at a Time*. Came out a month ago and I self-published that one.

Debbi: Now I have to ask you about that one, because I noticed it was described as a comedy crime novel.

Sandra: I live in a very small town in Tennessee and there's only one stop sign, one store and one little bitty diner, and it's not even incorporated. It's not actually even a town, but it's about the two ladies that run the diner, own the diner. They have a flood, their pipes freeze, and they have a flood which destroys their kitchen and they can't get money any other way. So they decide to kidnap a guy. But when they kidnap him and try to collect the ransom, all kinds of crazy things happen. When they try to go get the ransom and there is... One time they're having the lady that's sending them the ransom, take it up, attach it to a drone and take it up. And she was going to fly like a fourth of a mile to where they were. But a squirrel hunter shot the drone down and got the money.

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Debbi: This sounds like the plot of a Coen Brothers' movie or something.

Sandra: Every time they try to collect the ransom something weird happens. And it's a lot of twists and at the end of the book it ends up really good.

Debbi: Fascinating. Let's see. Your protagonist, from what I gather, is Kelly G?

Sandra: The first four books I wrote were a crime series, New Hampshire Crime Series. I lived in Barrington, New Hampshire for four years, and I really liked the area. I don't live there anymore, obviously, but I started out writing in what is happening in that area. And it was Kelly G, Detective Kelly G and Detective Carver. And the first four books that I wrote were the New Hampshire Crime Series with them. And then I went totally off the wall and decided to see if I could write a comedy and that's where *The Clock Struck Midnight*, *One Cent at a Time*, came in.

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Debbi: Ah, okay, so it's a standalone that's part of a series- I'm sorry, what did you say?

Sandra: I said I was just seeing what I could do and what I couldn't.

Debbi: Right. Always test your limits artistically, I say. And that's not part of the series then, it's a standalone?

Sandra: The two books, the two last books are definitely standalone. Both of them. Yes. The first four are a series and the two last books are standalone. And then "Barnaby, The Satisfied Troll", that's a twenty-page short story for adults for Halloween.

Debbi: Wow. And *One Cent at a Time*, would that be your seventh book?

Sandra: That was my sixth one. Unless you count the Halloween story, then it would be seven, yeah.

Sandra: But its been, since March 2020, so it's been a year and a half.

Debbi: Goodness. Does the series that you wrote, does it have a particular arc in terms of the development of the characters, or do you just sort of wing it?

Sandra: I just sort of wing it. I develop their characters in the first book and I just continued it in the next three.

Debbi: So, you don't have a plan for them, ultimately, as far as where they end up?

Sandra: No, no. I figured I'd leave people wanting more for a while and then I'd write another one of those in that series.

Debbi: Wow. I mean, I just really admire people who just write by the seat of their pants. I'm just stunned by it.

Sandra: [inaudible 00:11:34]

Debbi: It's a good way. I mean, if you don't mind doing a lot of editing afterwards, 'cause I'm sure you have to cut things out and so forth.

Sandra: Yeah. I'd hate for somebody to be watching my Google account for my searches, because I've got some pretty wild out.

Debbi: Oh, I Know how you feel.

Sandra: [inaudible 00:11:54].

Debbi: Believe me. Yeah. I mean, I think that's one of those things about writing crime. You end up doing these weird searches that you can't explain to others really. How do you explain, you know, researching poisons, different ways to kill people? I don't know. Different motivations for murder.

Sandra: [inaudible 00:12:21].

Debbi: Let's see. Well, we talked about the way you write on your phone, so I won't ask you about that again. But, what writers do you most inspire or what writers do you most admire and inspire your writing?

Sandra: Well, I always liked John Sanford and John Saul and Dean Koontz, and I'm just about to start your nine-book series. I've got a couple of them and I'm going to start on that probably tomorrow. I read about three or four books a week. It ranges from everything. I don't have any particular thing I like to read about, don't like to read about.

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Debbi: I know the feeling I like to read different types of books. Nonfiction, fiction.

Sandra: Whatever catches my interest. You know? I even waded through one book called *Quantum Entanglement*. When I started off, I thought "No way I could read this book" and it was really interesting once I got into it.

Debbi: It's amazing, isn't it? You just sort of give into the thing. I was going to ask you something and it slipped out of my mind. Oops, Oh well, it'll come back.

Sandra: I've lived all over the place and just met a lot of different characters in my life and been able to tell the way, cause people in different regions, they really do live differently.

Debbi: I know. I have lived all over the place too.

Sandra: Hey, you know what I mean, then. It kind of gives you ideas of different characters and stuff.

Debbi: There is definitely, there are regional differences between the way people act, customs, speech patterns. Oh my gosh. It's amazing.

Sandra: I even lived in Okinawa, Japan for six months in the nineties. The younger people love me, but the older people, they'd cross the street to keep having to walk up the same side of the street.

Debbi: Wow. Why is that?

Sandra: Because, the bomb and everything. This was Okinawa, yeah. They remembered it. They weren't too happy with Americans still.

Debbi: My goodness gracious. What advice would you give to anyone who wants to write books?

Sandra: Someone who wants to start writing? Oh Lord. I would just say, if you really want to do it, just sit down and start. You never know what you can do until you actually start trying. And you don't have to have the entire story in your head, how everything's going to happen and everything, before you start. You can always develop it as it goes.

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Debbi: And no matter what you write, you can always change it later if you don't like it.

Sandra: Yeah. Like I said, after I finish writing mine, I go through it one time and change things. And then after that, I'm like, "no, I'm not going to go through it again". You can always go back and add or... you know how it is.

Debbi: That's right. Yeah.

Sandra: But if you're really interested in it, it's something that you want to do, you should pursue it.

Debbi: Absolutely. I agree with you completely. What are you working on now?

Sandra: I am working on the sequel now to *The Clock Struck Midnight*, my Blackbeard's ghost book. It's going to be, *It's Twelve O'Clock and All's Well*, and it's going to be the sequel to *The Clock Struck Midnight* because everybody keeps asking me for the sequel for it.

Debbi: This book says really intriguing. *The Clock Struck Midnight*.

Sandra: You need to read it.

Debbi: Humorous mystery, is that the way you would categorize it?

Sandra: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Debbi: What about the first series? How would you categorize the first four books?

Sandra: I would just say that they're a crime mystery series because I usually have two plots going on during the book that happen. And, like *Fatal Prediction*, I had a guy, he got released from jail early and went after his ex-wife and killed her and kidnapped his two young kids that was under four years old, both of them. And he took them up into New Hampshire and took them to a cabin way up in the woods and left them alone with a blizzard going on so he could go collect the ransom money and he ends up getting killed, trying to collect the ransom money. And no one knows where the kids are. So a psychic comes in and, and helps them find where the kids are. But in the meantime, there's a doctor and a nurse that are delivering babies, but stealing the babies, telling the mothers the babies died and things and sell them for adoption. That's the second story in the book.

Debbi: My goodness. Let's see. Is there anything you'd like to add before we finish up?

Sandra: Not really. I really appreciate you having me on and I look forward to reading your books. I just might've said, if you want to start writing, just jump in with both feet and however you, you know, do it, just do it. There's no set way to actually become a writer.

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Debbi: Yeah. There are no real rules about this, about how to start. I mean, just start. That's what it comes down to.

Sandra: Look out for publishers. Pick your publishers carefully.

Debbi: Oh yes. That is definitely. If you're going to get a publisher, be very careful about who you pick. That is such wisdom right there. Thank you. And where can we, where can someone buy your books?

Sandra: They can all be purchased on Amazon or if you Google 'books by Sandra Wells', you can see how to purchase them there. Also, my *Clock Struck Midnight* is through Target and Books-A-Million, they have it for sale.

Debbi: Excellent. That's good to know that some stores are carrying your books. That's great. Cause we depend so much on algorithms these days. It's kind of nice having the physical product out there. Isn't it?

Sandra: Yes. I've got two or three libraries that carry them and about four bookstores.

Debbi: Well, good. I'm glad we added that part then. Oh, I was going to say my books, actually you mentioned nine books. I have four in a series and I have one, that's the start of a series that I'm going to be coming out with the sequel later on this year and the others are standalones. Yeah, so just so you know, but they're all written by me and then for what they're worth and I hope you enjoy them.

Sandra: Yeah. I found you on Goodreads. I followed you so I can keep up with you.

Debbi: Oh cool. Well, we'll try. Yeah, because I, you know, I put up a lot of reviews and things. I mean, actually my reviews tend to be on YouTube these days, but whatever. Wherever you can find me, there am. Something like that. Wherever you go, there you are.

Sandra: Well, I don't know if I'll ever become as well known as you are. That's that's probably doubtful, but you know, I've tried. Keep on trying.

Debbi: That's funny. Cause I don't, I don't feel very well known.

Sandra: You are. You should be congratulated on it.

Debbi: Thank you to anybody who knows me for, for being out there and supporting me, I guess. I just want to thank you for being here today, Sandra. It was really nice talking to you and-

Sandra: Thank you.

Debbi: Sure thing. Before we go, I just want to remind you that if you enjoy the programming here, I'd greatly appreciate your support on Patreon. I want to thank everyone for listening and I encourage you to check out that Patreon page because I'm always tinkering with it. Our next guest will be Anne Laughlin. Till then take care and happy reading.