

Readers enjoy learning more about their favorite authors. What brought about your interest in becoming a police officer?



*I'm good in a crisis, and I was interested in service to the community. After my divorce, I needed to support my son, Aaron, and obtain an education. I never received child support from my ex. Long story. Law Enforcement Educational Program, L.E.E.P., paid for college tuition for people serving in law enforcement. My interest in a balanced mind, body, and spirit came from my religious and dance background and influenced my decision to remain active in community and not work in an office job.*

Was anyone else in your family background in law enforcement?

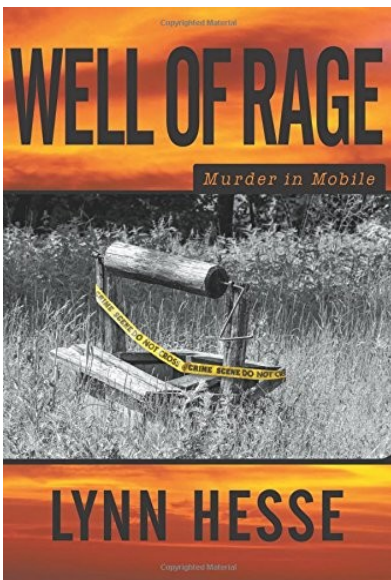
*No. Miners, lumberjacks, storekeepers are in my family tree. Grandmother Hazel Tharp joined the textile union in the 1930s and owned part of the The Tharp Grocery Store in Webb City, Missouri. I hope my genealogy research in my Scottish roots will uncover an ancestor who worked in law enforcement.*

How did a gal from Missouri wind up in Georgia?

*My dad worked for Toledo Scales -- middle management -- in the early 60s. He was transferred from Toledo to Atlanta in 1963.*

Do you have any children? Spouse? Pets?

*I have two grown children, Aaron and Nikki. Both of them are married. My husband is a photojournalist for the Hometown News Atlanta. He has two feral cats he feeds.*



Where did your idea for the storyline in “Well of Rage” come from?

*Two initial sources:*

*I was struggling to decide whether to retire and wound up in Mobile, Al. on vacation. My husband and I were walking on Dauphin St. in Mobile. I noticed a billiard parlor without patrons coming and going in the middle of many busy billiard parlors and bars. This parlor had a u-shaped bar and tables from the 1950s with white geezers smoking and drinking inside. When I looked in the front windows, a chill ran down my spine. If these guys weren't the remnants of the KKK or a militia group, I'd say they were close. Please realize this novel was written before 2015 and before the policy change occurred within militia/white-supremacy groups seeking mainstream news headlines. The low-key “cells of leaderless resistance” in “Well of Rage” were formed after the Klan declared bankruptcy because of a 7 million civil judgment awarded to Beulah Mae Donald of Mobile in 1987. Her African-American son, Michael, was beaten, strangled, and hung from a tree by Klan members in 1981.*

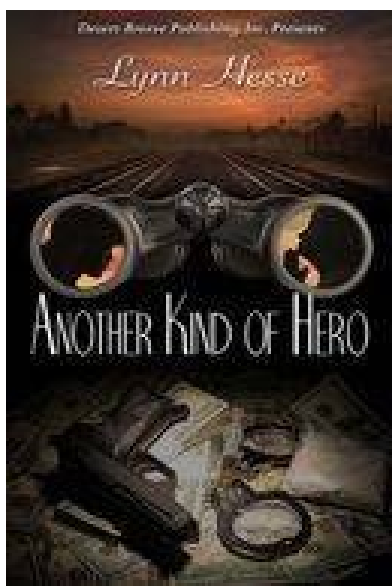
What did you learn after publishing that one that was helpful to you when writing this second book, “Another Kind of Hero”?

*Gosh, big learning curve. I was on an authors' panel at a conference and met a line author/editor with contacts with several small presses. I had the book professionally edited and sent the book to three publishing houses. I understood rejection was a part of the business. I followed the instructions for submissions, easier said than done. One accepted the book. On a practical level, I made “Another Kind of Hero” a novella because I wanted a book with a competitive price, and I realized marketing my first book took time and energy away from writing.*

How did you come up with the story idea for “Another Kind of Hero”?

*AKH was half finished when “Well of Rage” was published in August of 2016. The process is complex for me.*

*After my mother died in 2007, a bird kept flying into the windows of my dining room where I often sat to have my morning coffee or tea. I took this experience and wrote “Bam, Karma” a rejected flash fiction piece, turned it into a short play produced in 2011, and then it became the beginning of AKH. The idea of exploring dissimilar personalities, in this case the Kendall sisters, one wanting to sit and do nothing pitted against the contradictory urge in the other to fix things, interested me. I used these kernels of truth to create the character sketches for the sisters, Mavis and Helen.*



*Before her death from Parkinson, my mother told me the true story about a biker/ road scholar stopping by her country Methodist church on Johnstonville Road. in Forsyth and asking whether his African-American girlfriend, a trucker, would be welcome. The undercover DEA agent, Dewey Blackmon, and his girlfriend, Cora Justin Dupont came alive for me as I wrote in my journal, and then became three-dimensional characters in AKH.*

After you decide what you want your story to be about, how do you go about developing your characters and setting?

*I write a scene, document questions in my notebook, add to my on-going outline, and edit the scene the next day before I write another scene. I reread the manuscript. Edit. For an hour or two each day I live in my imagination and a new world builds into story.*

*I listen as the characters talk to me as they reveal themselves and the plot. Wanda, the ghost, actually woke me up one morning. Her manner and voice were clear and insistent. I hadn't planned on a ghost being in my story. I like surprises, but this was inconvenient. Several chapters were already written, and the major plot revisions required accommodating this new character. However, I love Wanda's loyalty, humor, and her matter of fact manner.*

*I revisited the place if it exists, like Forsyth, Ga. I study my relatives and the local people.*

*Because I write mysteries, while I write, I am tracking clues and the details of character, place, time frame, consistency of language in the dialogue, the smells, the layers of the stories, subplots, and themes.*

What do you feel the benefits are for a writer in joining a writing guild, such as Sisters in Crime, and what do you find helpful about attending writer conferences?

*Hum, I am an introvert; conferences and organizations are energy zappers for me, but a must for new authors. SinC helps female mystery and crime writers even the playing field. Male authors still are published and reviewed more often than female authors. I find critique groups the most helpful for the actual writing process.*

When you aren't writing, you also belong to some dance groups. When did you become interested in dance?

*I have always danced. Maybe, I'll be a Broadway star in my next life. I use dance and performance art to work with community and foster peace and social justice. I am in training with community.*

For readers who enjoy crime, drama and suspense books, what can you tell them about your books that will spark their interest?

*I met some real characters during my police work on the streets of DeKalb County, Georgia. I saw the highs and lows of human behavior in everyday heroes and the destruction wrought by warped individuals.*

*I understand how humor can change perspective and kindness gains trust. I write about these layers of life.*

Are you working on another book now?

*Of course, based on genealogy and cave myth research, I am writing a historical novel with a midwife protagonist who's living in the Boston Mountains in 1870s Arkansas.*

*Also, I have another novella in the rough draft/ in-progress stage with an anti-hero female protagonist who is part of a Roma trio involved in an art heist at the High Museum in Atlanta. I researched Edward Hopper's painting for this book.*

What is your goal for future books?

*To write a book readers can't put down, and after finishing the book, they miss the characters and realize they have explored something new about the world or themselves.*

What can you tell aspiring writers you have learned along your journey to being published that will help them the most on their journey?

*Be kind to yourself. Read widely with an open mind. Write, write, and write. If you write 360 words a day, a paragraph, for a year you will have a novel length manuscript and five days to spare for emergencies. Write any way you want, in pencil if that inspires you, but to be published you must learn to use your computer and format for fiction. There are templates available online. Purchase a humorous grammar book. You will need it*

*before buying a style guide. Wading through The Chicago Manual Style of dos and don't for fiction writers is laborious reading, and the rules are quite different than using APA or MLA. Good Luck.*

Is there anything else you'd like to add that your readers might find of interest?

*Don't stop reading and writing. The imagination is engaged in dynamic work during the above activities. Imagination can sustain civilization and foster an understanding of others unlike ourselves.*

Where are your books available and do you offer signed copies?

*I love signing my books and talking about writing. Please invite me to speak at a book or writing event. Conducting workshops involving the healing powers of writing interest me.*

*I will be launching "Another Kind of Hero" and signing books at Tall Tales Book Store on November 4, 2017 from 2-3 p.m. and The Milton Literary Festival on November 11, 2017 at 1 p.m. Invitations to speak about writing, use my improvisational storytelling skills, and sign books are welcome.*

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