

## Author Interview with Ellen Butler by Itsy Bitsy Book Bits

### How Did You Get Into Writing?

· When my kids were little I wrote outlines for 2 of my published novels, however I didn't have the time to actually get to the writing. So, I stuffed the notes in a drawer and forgot about them. Fast forward a few years, and my youngest went into preschool and I had 3 hours three mornings a week to myself. I brought out those dusty notes and two years later Poplar Place became my first published novel.

### What's Your Favorite Genre to Write?

· I write in a variety of genres. Right now I'm focused on mystery/suspense, so we'll say, for the moment, that is my favorite genre to write.

### Is there a genre you've always wanted to write in that you haven't yet?

· Yes. There is a gentleman who helped during my WWII research for my historical fiction novel, The Brass Compass. He led a fascinating life during the war and I'd love to write his memoir.

### Who are some of your inspirations?

· I'm inspired by too many authors to count. However, I've also been inspired by friends and neighbors who have taken tough situations in their lives and made the best of them, or went back to school to learn a new profession. Those every day people have inspired me to put bits and pieces of that resilience and strength into some of my own characters which, I feel, enhances the story.

### Do any of your stories have personal experiences in them?

· Yes. I think every author incorporates personal experiences into their stories. For instance, I have been sky diving. I incorporated a description of the experience into The Brass Compass. In Fatal Legislation, my character lives in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. and works for a medical association—I worked for the American Academy of Physician Assistants for many years, and live in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

### Who are some of your favorite authors to read?

· When I'm working on my mysteries, I enjoy reading things by Melinda Leigh, J.D. Robb, Colleen Shogan, and Dan Brown. However, I don't have as much time to read for pleasure because so much of my reading time is taken up by doing research for the books I'm writing.

### What's your writing process look like? (Outline or go with the flow of your character)

· For my romances, I was a total panster. I built stories around my characters and they often took over during the writing process. However, writing mysteries, I can't work that way. I've got to plot an entire outline otherwise I'm constantly rewriting parts and my beta readers will occasionally find plot holes.

### What are some of your hobbies?

- When I'm not shuttling my kids from one activity to another, or helping them with homework, I enjoy reading, sampling new wines, and participating in the many cultural opportunities, such as: attending plays, musicals, and lectures, and visiting the many museums Washington, D.C. affords me.

Have you attended any signings? If so, what was your favorite thing about it?

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Have you ever been noticed in public by a reader?

- Yes

When reading reviews, what is something you love to see written?

- That I kept a reader up late into the night because they couldn't put my book down.

If you could spend the day with one of your characters, who would it be and what would you do?

- Poppy Reagan. She is in the Love, California Style trilogy and my most favorite character. She's bold, funny, and much braver than I am, and I would enjoy spending a day on the job with her (she's a party planner).

What are you currently working on?

- I am currently working on the 3rd book of the Karina Cardinal mystery series. It's called Diamonds & Deception, and Karina's sister Jillian pulls her into this adventure.

What's your writing routine?

- It varies. Some days I'm writing, other days I'm researching, and some days I'm reviewing and rewriting the chapter I wrote the day before. There are also days where I focus strictly on building promotion materials and ad buys. Unlike some writers, when I have writer's block, I have to step away from the computer to let the story run around in my subconscious, and once the knotty problem is solved, I'm back in front of the keyboard.

Do you have any superstitions when it comes to writing? If so, what?

- I keep my Saint Francis de Sales medal (the patron saint of writers and journalists) hanging from the lamp at my desk. And occasionally when I'm struggling with a chapter or passage, I'll put it on.

What is the best writing advice you've ever received?

- When you get a bad review - DO NOT ENGAGE! Step away from the computer, go for a run, drink a glass of wine, do something else. Do not get involved in a back and forth. Even if the reviewer is talking about some other book that's not yours. It will only lead down a rabbit hole, and there will be no tea and crumpets at the end.

Where do you find the names for your characters?

· I determine my character's ancestry first, then determine a name. For instance, in the D.C. area, we have a very diverse population, so my characters could be from any nation - India, Portugal, Columbia, you name it, we've got it. So, names don't come easily, because I have to build my character's background before settling on a name.

What is your favorite book made into a movie/tv show?

· Harry Potter. I think the directors did a very good job building that series.

Anything else you want your readers to know about you?

· Author, mother, wife, shoe lover, chocoholic, fashion fan, sarcastic wit, autumn enthusiast, dancer, bookworm, and good-time devotee.

If you won the lottery what would you do with the money?

· Become a philanthropist and start my own foundation. I would continue to support causes dear to me such as, improvements for special education, cancer research, childhood hunger, and women's empowerment.

In your everyday life how do you give back to the world?

· I hope my books bring readers the three E's - enjoyment, education, and entertainment. I'm also consider myself a social and political activist - living in D.C. will do that to a person.

If you could give your younger self one piece of writing advice, what would it be?

· Start writing sooner. Don't wait.