

ER nurse novelist pens happy endings

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MARCIA ANDERSON
ThisWeek Contributor

In 1987, a Columbus nurse published her first historical romance, taking her pseudonym from her employer, Grant Hospital.

Today, Laurie Grant still enjoys the drama of the hospital's emergency room while spending her personal time creating fictional characters who struggle successfully against the odds.

"I went into ER nursing because of the wide variety of experiences it affords," Grant recently told *ThisWeek*. "Working in the ER is full of suspense ... you never know what the evening will hold. I also like romantic fiction because, like most of us, I want a happy ending, which real life does not always provide. I want the good guy and girl to win."

Grant, who moved from Texas to Columbus as a toddler and grew up in Bexley, has flourished in both of her disparate careers. In addition to her other ER duties, she became qualified as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, or S.A.N.E., working closely with doctors, police, the courts and local psychological support systems to provide care for rape victims.

"A busy ER like ours does not give the doctor sufficient time to spend with the patient to do the exam and follow-up in court," Grant explained. "So this is why the S.A.N.E. program has been such a help to the victim and the legal system."

When she's wearing her multi-published novelist hat, Grant likes to leave the contemporary world behind, setting her fan-pleasing books in Medieval England or the American West.

"I have found the age of knights and castles to have a lot of color and pageantry," the author said. "But in that era, as well as that of western historicals, times were brutal. So my fictional hero has to be tough and heroic as well as tender to his lady."

Layering in accurate historical details requires Grant to be a strong researcher.

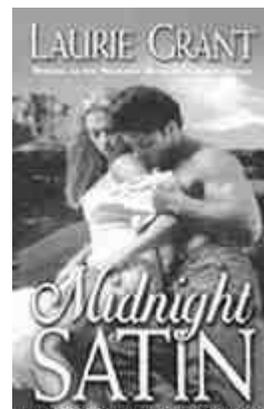
"When I started, we didn't have the Internet, so I used libraries," she said. "Now I use the Internet a lot, but I still find most of my information in books. Over the years, I've accumulated a lot of reference books!"

With the ease of e-mail communications these days, writers are often contacted by readers who think they've caught an error in a book or just want to provide feedback.

"Interestingly, I've heard from descendants of real historical characters who have had roles in my books," Grant said, "such as Wyatt Earp and a fairly obscure military leader in the Hundred Years War between France and England."

Unlike the unpredictability of the ER, Grant has control over events and characters within her romances, producing emotional and entertaining books that land on readers' "keepers" shelves.

Romantic Times Bookclub, the preeminent magazine for the romance industry, recognized Grant's popular novels with nominations for their "Best First Medieval" and "Career Achievement in Westerns" awards.



Laurie Grant

Midnight Satin, the author's November release, is the second in her Civil War era trilogy from Leisure. "The 'Midnight' series concerns the Taylor family in Texas during and just after the Civil War," Grant said. "There are two sisters and a brother, and each has a story. But each book really stands alone." When the first in the series, *Midnight Silk*, was published in 2003, the *Romantic Times Bookclub* reviewer wrote, "Grant pens a compelling Civil War page-turner." *Midnight Velvet*, the novel that wraps up the trilogy, will hit stores in 2005.

A tale of new beginnings and second chances, *Midnight Satin* features Jake Taylor, a former Confederate soldier who returns to his cotton plantation after the war.

"He finds Erica Mueller, the love of his life, in the Hill Country of Texas, which was then largely inhabited by German immigrants who had served the Union, rather than the Confederacy," Grant explained. The heroine's family considers Jake an enemy, thanks to the antebellum hostility that lingered through the Reconstruction years. Jake and Erica need to overcome their pasts and the clash of their cultures to reach their happy ending.

"I think romance fiction is uplifting and empowering to women," Grant stated, "and offers something for every reader, from sweet and spiritual to very sexy ... but always, always, the happy ending."

More than 50 million readers agree, and romances -- from chick lit and romantic suspense to paranormal and inspirational -- accounted for 55 percent of popular fiction paperback sales last year. Grant, who has two married daughters, five grandchildren, four dogs and two cats, is also an avid reader. She developed a love for books and her talent for writing while growing up in Bexley. "It had a great school system and is largely responsible for giving me an excellent grounding in English and history," she said. "Of course, a lot of that 'grounding' was also gotten by being an only child and reading constantly. Today, I get my ideas for books from reading history and from everyday life."

The author, who has written for Harlequin Historicals and Warner Books as well as Leisure, finds that the allure of a good romance is universal.

"I have heard from readers in Ghana, Jamaica, and Ukraine, all of whom found my books when tourists left them in hotels," she said. "My books travel more widely than I do."

For now, Grant is too busy to travel. She's writing her 17th book between shifts at the hospital, this time trying her hand at a medical suspense series. For inspiration, the author can draw on a wealth of ER experiences from medical cases, such as heart attacks, trauma from auto accidents and gunshot wounds.

For the first time since she published, Grant's two professions will meld in novels written from her medical insider perspective, and her fans are sure to be pleased.

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