

Author brings romance *Home for the Holidays*

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ThisWeek Contributor



Leanne Banks

Fans of *USA Today* best-selling romance author Leanne Banks have two treats to be thankful for this holiday season – a heartwarming Christmas novella and the eagerly anticipated sequel to her May 2003 release, *Some Girls Do*. These days, when the need for entertainment and happy endings is at an all-time high, Banks’ books are “keeper” gifts for all romance readers.

“I think romance novels are fabulous. They’re life-affirming and love-affirming,” Banks, the winner of *Romantic Times Bookclub*’s Career Achievement Awards in the “Series Sensuality” and “Love and Laughter” categories, recently told *ThisWeek*. “The best romance novel makes me root for the characters, makes me believe in the transforming power of love, and inspires me to be a better person.” Banks’ enthusiasm for the genre and her talents as a writer have garnered her many honors, including a RITA, the top award from the industry’s professional association, Romance Writers of America.

The Virginia-based Banks decided to try her hand at romance writing due to her personal enjoyment of category romances, short (180- to 250-page) books with contemporary settings. “I set a naive goal of writing and selling a romance novel within two years,” Banks explained. “I was fortunate to meet the goal, and I’ve sold every complete book I’ve written since.” Her first novels were published by the now-defunct Meteor Kismet and Bantam Loveswept imprints. Soon after, however, Banks sold to industry giant Silhouette and continues penning romances for the publisher’s Special Edition and Desire lines. Today, as one of Silhouette’s premiere authors, she is often invited to participate in the publisher’s anthologies.

Silhouette’s *Home for the Holidays*, released this month, features Banks’ feel-good Texas Christmas tale, “Faith’s Sugar Plum Daddy.” The anthology also includes novellas by best-selling authors Dixie Browning and Kathie DeNosky. *Home for the Holidays* presents the stories of three sisters “who unite for the holidays and find love in surprising and wonderful ways,” Banks said.

The prolific author conquered a new challenge this year when she moved into the single title (300- to 400-page) romance market. *Some Girls Do*, recommended as a “steamy beach read” by *People Magazine*, attracted a new audience to Banks’ witty storytelling. “My Silhouette editor moved to Warner Books and hounded me -- in the nicest way -- to write a single title book for her,” Banks said. “My writing voice is the same in my single title romances, but the longer length allows me to develop secondary characters and their storylines more.” *Some Girls Do* was chosen as a “Top Pick” by *Romantic Times Bookclub*, whose reviewer praised, “Romance doesn’t get any better...than Leanne Banks.”

Weaving three-dimensional characters, fresh takes on popular plots, and her signature humor, Banks has earned quite a following. Her Web site (www.leannebanks.com) has a multi-page “Favorite Quotes” section, compiled by readers posting sentences that tugged at their emotions or made them laugh. In *Some Girls Do*, Banks presented a bumper crop of funny lines, opening each chapter with shrewd comments proffered by the heroine’s mother. These pearls of wisdom include “Every once in a while, you meet a man worth the trouble he’s going to cause you.”

When She's Bad, a November release and the sequel to *Some Girls Do*, features a new set of quotations. "Delilah's Dictums," words to live by from the book's heroine, strike the funnybone on their way to the heart. These adages range from "Getting a man's attention is like holding a hot auction on Ebay. A little competition and they're off to the races." to "The miracle of love is that it can happen to you even if you think you don't deserve it." Does the author follow these truisms? "I think there's a grain of truth or wisdom or both in each of the dictums," Banks stated. "My characters aren't based on me, but I love them passionately and I identify with them."

One of Banks' fans is Janet Evanovich, the author of the wildly popular, comic mystery series featuring bounty-hunter Stephanie Plum. Evanovich's recommendation, "When life gets tough, read a book by Leanne Banks," graces the cover of *When She's Bad*. What does Banks do when her life gets tough? "Sometimes I have to be serious," Banks said, "but I have found that a strong gallows sense of humor can help a girl keep her sanity in some pretty challenging circumstances."

"As a writer, I received two great pieces of advice," Banks stated. "The first, from Janet Evanovich, was 'When it comes to your writing, never settle.' The second was 'Use affirmations.'" Banks offers a list of affirmations on her Web site to help aspiring writers keep motivated during their quest for publication. "Some of the comments I got back from (writing contest) judges felt like bullets," Banks said of her pre-publishing experiences. "That was when I started using self-affirmations daily to beat the discouragement." She swears by the affirmations today. "The potential for rejection abounds, even for a published author. These affirmations are powerful tools at just about any time during a writer's career," Banks said.

There is no doubt that the affirmations are working. *When She's Bad* is amassing positive reviews, including praise from *Publishers Weekly*, whose reviewer described the novel a "zesty, dialogue-driven tale." *Romantic Times Bookclub* awarded it a "Top Pick," stating "With humor and insight, this supreme storyteller cuts to the heart of her characters' fears and insecurities and makes us fall in love right along with them."

Banks' enthusiasm for the romance genre and her talents as a writer contribute to her success as a writing workshop presenter as well as an author. Saturday, in an event open to the public, she will speak at the Central Ohio Fiction Writers meeting at Upper Arlington Library. "My first real experience with Ohio was this summer on a Levy Book Distributor Bus Tour that traveled from Akron to Cincinnati," Banks said. "The Ohioans I met were terrific! I learned that a buckeye is a hard, inedible seed. I tried to understand why this would be a college mascot. But I'm from Virginia Tech country, where the mascot is a hokie, rumored to be a castrated turkey."

The Virginia Tech Hokies are the only turkeys associated with Banks. Her November releases reflect one of Banks' favorite affirmations, "Creativity flows through me easily and effortlessly." *Home for the Holidays* and *When She's Bad* are two romantic treats just in time for Thanksgiving. Gobble them up today.

Meet the Author

What: Leanne Banks, author of *Home for the Holidays* and *When She's Bad*, will appear at two free-to-the-public events – a writing workshop and a booksigning.

When & Where:

Saturday, Nov. 15, from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. Leanne Banks will discuss putting a fresh twist on fan-favorite storylines at the theater on the lower level of the Upper Arlington Library (2800 Tremont Road, Columbus)

Sunday, Nov. 16, from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. Leanne Banks will sign her latest releases at the Easton Barnes & Noble (4005 Townsfair Way, Columbus; 614/476-8480)