

Coffee Time Romance interview

September 2007

Coffee Time Romance: Patricia can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Patricia Sargeant: Hi, Karen. Thank you very sincerely for allowing me to spend some time with you and the Coffee Time Romance community.

I would love to tell you a bit about myself. I grew up in New York City. Although I now live in Columbus, Ohio, I still consider New York home. I think that's because the majority of my relatives still live there.

I love the National Football League (Go Jets!) and the National Basketball Association (Go Knicks!). I also enjoy college football. I'm a Big East Conference fan living in the heart of Big Ten Conference country. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, right? :)

Some of my characters' names were inspired by NFL or NBA players. For example, in *On Fire*, the hero's last name, Payton, was inspired by Gary Payton of the Miami Heat NBA team.

I'm participating in an anthology, *The Power of Love*, which is scheduled for release June 2008. My heroine's last name, Barber, was inspired by the NFL twins, Ronde and Tiki Barber. Tiki, who played for the New York Giants, recently retired from the NFL. Very sad.

CTR: How did you get started in your writing career and what made you decide to become a romance writer?

P.S.: My sister introduced me to the joys of reading. You know that special feeling you get when you're completely wrapped in a book? My goal is to write a book - well, preferably books :) - that give readers that same special feeling. Everyone should know that feeling. It's better than movies, better than TV, better than the Internet. And just as wonderful as learning your team made it to the NFL playoffs. :)

CTR: Who was the hardest character to write about and why?

P.S.: Oooh. Good one, Karen. I may have to come back to this question.

I think the answer would be the heroine I'm writing about now. She and the hero came to me years ago. Back in the 1990s. I know what their relationship is, but I don't know what she wants for the long term. I'm trying to figure out her goal.

When I'm stuck like this, it helps me to talk through the story or the character with my husband. It's the way he listens. He doesn't have to say anything - and sometimes, he doesn't. It's just the way he listens. As though he's confident that, if he gives me space to talk it through, I'll figure it out.

CTR: What would say are the greatest elements in writing your type of books?

P.S.: Oooh. This is a superb question, Karen, and a little easier to answer. :) I think the greatest element of any book is the characters. To write a good story, you must craft great characters. Your characters must connect with your readers and make your readers care about them. They will keep your readers in your story. Your characters communicate to the reader how to feel, how to respond.

Take for example, Ann Christopher's book, *Just About Sex*. (Ann and I were recently discussing this book. I love her hero and wanted to know how she crafted him.) Anyway, Ann wrote Alex so you could really feel his love for Simone and his pain at her rejection. She made you want to reach into the book and hug him. How could you not want him to earn Simone's love?

Different genre, same concept. JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Everyone was depending on Harry. Harry was depending on Harry. Voldemort was in some way responsible for the death of so many of Harry's loved ones, and he was bent on destroying the world. How could you not want Harry to defeat Voldemort?

Characters, and building the connection between them and your readers. That's the most important element of any story.

CTR: Do you have any special music or snacks you eat while writing?

P.S.: Well, I prefer beverages - coffee, tea, sodas - to snacks while I'm writing, which is a good thing considering I'm still trying to lose the 20 pounds I've packed on since taking that picture for my Web site. The beverages are also less messy than the chocolate-covered peanuts I'm addicted to. :)

CTR: Can you give us the list of your books?

P.S.: With pleasure. Thank you for asking.

My first book, *You Belong to Me*, debuted November 2006. It's a romantic suspense that reunites a divorced couple in a race to unmask a serial killer. The heroine is a science fiction author. The hero is an independent film producer. When the story begins, the heroine has reluctantly sold her book's movie rights to a film company. Imagine her surprise when she discovers her ex-husband owns the company.

My second book, *On Fire*, is a September 2007 release. It's currently on shelves, so don't let me keep you if you want to nip out and buy it now. :) *On Fire* also is a romantic suspense. The hero is a fire investigator. The heroine is a newspaper reporter. They start out as adversaries but become allies when they realize the string of arsons they're investigating is connected to a series of murders.

The back cover copy, excerpts and reviews for both books are on my Web site, www.PatriciaSargeant.com.

I'm also participating in an anthology with 11 other authors, including Lori Foster, Dianne Castell, Karen Kelly, Toni Blake, Kay Stockham, J.C. Wilder, Rosemary Laury, LuAnne McClane, Erin McCarthy and two other ladies whose names shamefully escape me right now.

The title of the anthology is *The Power of Love*. The release date is June 2008. This project is Lori and Dianne's brainchild. We're donating all of the proceeds from the anthology to a battered women's shelter.

I'm so very excited about this project, not just because of the story I wrote (tentatively titled *Angel in the Alley*) and not just because I get to work with some of my all-time favorite authors - what a thrill! - but because of the cause we're supporting.

A lot of people shake their heads when they think of domestic violence. They wonder why the women don't just leave. There are a lot of factors to consider in their situation. How will they support themselves? How will they support their children? Where will they go to be safe? It takes a great deal of courage and a huge leap of faith to escape a situation such as theirs. That's why, when they find the courage to take the leap, we have to make sure there's a safe place for them to land. I'm very proud to help support this battered women's shelter. So, please, mark your calendars for June 2008 and get a copy of the book for yourself. And maybe a friend. It's supporting a very worthy cause. And, with a line up of authors such as the ones I listed above, you're guaranteed to have hours of enjoyment.

Stepping off my soapbox now. :)

CTR: What was your favorite class in High School?

P.S.: I actually had several, including English and African American history. I think it was the teachers.

I had one English teacher who got all fired up over Shakespeare's plays. He would use his whole body - his arms, his shoulders, his facial expressions - when he read the lines. His enthusiasm was contagious.

My African American history teacher was inspiring. He had first-hand experience with a lot of the accounts he shared in class - the Freedom Rides, the sit ins, the marches. It was like unlocking another dimension of our country. To learn about the courage of the people - black and white - who struggled together for societal equality was captivating, inspiring and humbling. And it was especially captivating to learn it from someone who lived it.

CTR: Did you play sports or did you have any clubs you were a member of?

P.S.: Actually, I got into a couple of activities throughout my school years. In high school, I was on the volleyball team. My close friends decided to become cheerleaders. Because of that, one of our teachers asked why I didn't become a cheerleader, too. I told him the boys could come cheer for me. Humph!

I also was on the yearbook committees in junior high school and high school. Loved it. I wrote a bit for the high school newspaper. That was great. And I was president of my high school drama guild. Strangely, people aren't surprised to learn that. Hmmm.

CTR: What is your favorite movie that you could watch over and over?

P.S.: Oooh. I have so many. Um. I'll stick with the ones I sometimes watch while I'm running on the treadmill - *Frequency*, *Speed*, *Mulan* and *Two Can Play That Game*.

For me, watching those movies while exercising is a form of multi-tasking. I'm getting in a workout while studying the craft of writing. Take *Frequency*, for example. That movie shows you what the phrase "larger-than-life hero" means. When Catherine Mann would say, "You've got to make your heroes larger than life," I didn't understand what she meant - until I saw a scene from *Frequency*.

As a firefighter, Dennis Quaid's character is used to risking his life to protect strangers. So, later in the movie, when he has to stop a killer before the villain kills his wife, it's easy for you to understand the extremes he's willing to go through to protect his family.

CTR: Which actor would you pick to play your hero?

P.S.: I would pick Morris Chestnut. One of the reasons for that pick is *On Fire*'s hero, Matthew Payton, has a chip on his shoulder similar to the chip Morris Chestnut's character has in the movie *The Brothers*. He played that character so well - no exaggerations, still sympathetic - that I know he'd do a great job with Matthew Payton. Also, Morris Chestnut is not hard on the eyes. :)

For *On Fire*'s heroine, I'd pick Nia Long. Nia Long conveys a warmth and humor that I tried to convey in Sharon MacCabe. She's also petite and gorgeous, just like Sharon. :)

CTR: Where can readers find your books and how can they contact you?

P.S.: Readers can find my books at any book store - Barnes & Noble, B. Dalton's, Waldens, Borders, Books A Million, any independent book store. If it's not on the shelf, you can ask your bookseller to order it for you. It's also available online. There are links to BarnesandNoble.com, Amazon.com and BooksAMillion.com on my Web site, www.PatriciaSargeant.com. These links will take you directly to the Web page from which you can order the book.

I love hearing from readers. They can contact me at BooksByPatricia@yahoo.com. They also can chat with me online. I blog at the Pink Ladies Blog, www.PinkLadiesBlog.com, every Friday. Each Monday, I post at Crime Sistahs, www.CrimeSistahs.Blogspot.com.

CTR: Are you working on a new book right now?

P.S.: Yes, thank you very much for asking, Karen. *On Fire* actually is the first book in what I'm referring to as my *Fire* trilogy. I've just submitted the proposal for the second book in the *Fire* trilogy. It's tentatively titled *Through the Fire*, and I bring back Sharon MacCabe's friends, Allyson Scott and Andre Jamieson, in a romantic suspense of their own.

And I've started the proposal for the final installment of the romantic suspense trilogy, *Fire and Ice*. In this book, I bring back characters you'll meet in *Through the Fire*.

Karen, it's been a pleasure being interviewed by you. Thank you again for your time and interest.

Best!

Patricia