

Press Kit

Katrin's Chronicles:

*The Canon of
Jacqueline Dyanne, Vol. 1*



Valerie C. Woods



Table of Contents

Cover Art	3
Press Release.....	4
Testimonials	5
Sample Chapter	6
Author Photo	13
Author Bio	14
Author Interview.....	15

"If you don't write your own history, somebody else will make it up for you."



And so, after enduring three years of mystery-solving adventures, 13-year-old Katrin DuBois decided it was time to write her autobiography. Who else could set the record straight about the outrageous rumors about her family?

It all began when Katrin was in 6th grade. Her elder sister, 8th grader *Jacqueline Dyanne*, began exhibiting extraordinary, even paranormal, detecting abilities.

Katrin's Chronicles take place long before laptops, the Internet, cell phones and text messaging – Chicago, 1968. Although the time was technologically simple, the tangle of human relationships was as complex as ever.

I'm sure you can relate

If you relate to the idea that life is filled with mystery...

If you recognize that everyone has talents waiting to be mastered... Or,

If you understand that awakening to your hidden power is not always easy, but is the only way to truly live...

Then I welcome you to the *Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne*, Vol. 1, as chronicled by *Katrin the Youngest*.

V.C. Woods

Remote Mountaintop Retreat, 2013

V.C. Woods is a writer, traveler and adventurer of long-standing. Her work has been filmed, televised and published throughout the U.S. and Canada. Maybe even overseas, too. It's difficult to keep track.



COMPOSITION BOOK

Katrin's Chronicles:

The Canon of

Jacqueline Dyanne

Vol. 1

100 Sheets
9 3/4 x 7 1/2 (24.7 x 19.0 cm)
Wide Ruled

Valerie C. Woods



Katrin's Chronicles: The Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne - Vol. 1 Valerie C. Woods





Introducing African-American Girl Detectives

BooksEndeependent announces the August 15, 2013 Amazon.com release of Katrin's Chronicles: The Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne, Vol. 1. - featuring two savvy, slightly psychic African American girl detectives on Chicago's South Side during the historically turbulent era of the late 1960's.

UPDATE: Paperback edition available Sept, 24, 2013

Los Angeles, CA (PRWEB) August 10, 2013 -- Remember Nancy Drew or Trixie Belden? Now meet girl detectives Katrin and J. Dyanne DuBois! Written by screen and television writer, Valerie C. Woods (www.vcwoods.com) this breakthrough novel, Katrin's Chronicles: The Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne, expands the girl detective genre to include these smart, sister sleuths from the south side of Chicago.

On the verge of entering high school, precociously eloquent 13-year-old Katrin DuBois feels it's never too soon to start an autobiography. She decides to set the record straight about the outrageous rumors concerning certain adventures that began when she was in sixth grade. That's when her elder sister, 8th grader J. Dyanne, began exhibiting extraordinary detecting powers.

Set during the latter half of the historically turbulent year of 1968, these African-American tweens live in a working class neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. They manage to thrive in a world of social change with multi-generational family support, creative quick-thinking and fearless inquisitiveness. The dog days of August 1968 find them prohibited by their parents from visiting the Central Library downtown because of the riots during the Democratic Convention. However, there's plenty of adventure in their own neighborhood as they become swept up in family mysteries, neighborhood political schemes and discovery of a surprising legacy of psychic, even supernatural, talent.

A refreshing addition to the girl detective genre, early reviewers have acclaimed the combined mystery, history and magic realism woven together by an ingeniously delightful young narrator. Katrin enchants us with her chronicle as she follows her grandmother's advice: "If you don't write your own history, somebody else will make it up for you."

Katrin's Chronicles is bound to be a valuable resource for History and English teachers, an entertaining story for parents to read aloud, and a fun and empowering adventure for readers ages 11 and up! Read an excerpt at www.jdyanne.com.

Valerie C. Woods grew up on the South Side of Chicago and is the author of the novella I Believe... A Ghost Story for the Holidays, published in November 2012 by BooksEndeependent and Something for Everyone (50 Original Monologues), offered by Samuel French, Inc. Ms. Woods continues to write for the entertainment industry.

BooksEndeependent LLC www.Booksendeependent.com - is an independent publisher of fiction, non-fiction, young adult science fiction, mystery and fantasy, based in Los Angeles.

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Praise for...

Katrin's Chronicles: The Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne

By Valerie C. Woods

"The magical realism of Katrin's Chronicles read like Isabel Allende for the young adult reader. I enjoyed following Katrin and J. Dyanne through their adventures – and their Southside Chicago neighborhood. Though the place was new to me, the love a hard-working family and the excitement of growing up in such a politically-charged era felt familiar and friendly and fun." **Rosanne Welch, co-author of The Promise**

"I could really relate to the girls because they both are smart African American girls and I think that is something girls my age can't always say they relate to when it comes to some African American girls on television and in magazines. I thought it was really interesting including the events from 1968, especially since it was coming from the point of view of Katrin. I really enjoyed the book!" – **Olivia Haynes, student, age 14**

"Katrin's Chronicles is not a novel—it is an experience. It is the kind of story that can only be written by someone with a deep, knowing love of their characters and an abiding sense of place and time. This is a novel you can fall in love with. The atmosphere, the smells and the sounds of this beautiful world, created by Ms. Woods, is surely a world she has inhabited.

Although the funny and exciting adventures of the two young detectives would seem to be perfect for young teenagers, I also think this world of long ago will be a welcoming and healing place for many adults." **David Man, author of "About Acting...and Surviving the Sharks**

"My grand daughter likes strong girl detectives and I downloaded the book for her. She loved it and hopes there will be more. I asked her to tell me the plot and that took an hour of complicated stories. So I guess she really liked the book." **Shirley Sacks, author of "Bella Melman"**

"When I finished reading this book, I found myself thinking, "Boy, I can't wait for the next book in the series!" Katrin's Chronicles is great fiction. Well written, thoughtful, and funny, it is a mystery about two sister detectives in Chicago in the 1960's. It was a great read for me, as well as for my 10 and 13 year old girls who found themselves immediately drawn into the characters and the situations and couldn't put the book down! I highly recommend Katrin's Chronicles!" – **Dawn Comer-Jefferson, co-author of "The Promise"**

(www.BooksEndependent.com)

Chapter 5 - The Art of J. Dyanne

September 1968

Who knew 15 minutes could last so long? It had been over a week since J. Dyanne foiled the juvenile plot to influence the upcoming high school football season. As a result of her notorious aversion to media exposure and the ease with which she could slip away, unnoticed in a crowd, I had the *dubious* pleasure of seeing myself on the evening news and in the local papers for several days. Mom didn't make J. Dyanne go to church that Sunday because of all the unwanted attention. But Sunday afternoon Rev. Ingle and Alderman Weaver made a visit to 7541 to privately thank J. Dyanne for her assistance.

Since then, she retreated into solitary artistic pursuits that kept her from the public eye. But it's not easy to hide from your neighbors. She managed to sidestep the more ridiculous requests for her investigative assistance, except for Nicole Trotter. Who could resist the pleading eyes of a nine-year-old grieving for a lost dog named Buddy? You can't do it. She looked like a little coppery brown puppy herself.

Nicole had perched on the front porch for hours, holding onto Buddy's collar, waiting for J. Dyanne to come outside. When she finally capitulated, Nicole explained how she and Buddy were running down the block, when Nicole tripped and fell. Buddy had slipped from his collar and continued racing down the block and around the corner. By the time Nicole got to the end of the block, Buddy was nowhere to be seen. Nicole's eyes were brimming with hopeful tears. J. Dyanne was holding Buddy's collar as she listened to Nicole's story. I saw J. Dyanne shiver a little, despite the warm afternoon. She was about to comment but stopped short as she looked around.

A crowd of kids had gathered by that time. This wasn't unusual, as our front porch, located in the middle of the block, was a natural meeting place of the neighborhood. It was where we met before

setting off to play softball or go bowling. But this time it seemed everyone was expecting some kind of magic show. Naturally, J. Dyanne wasn't having it. She sent Nicole home and went back inside to finish her art project, still clutching Buddy's collar.

And so all eyes turned to me. I was peppered with questions about J. Dyanne. Was she really psychic? Did she really know everything? Who would be the next president? You name it, they asked it. By default, I, Katrin the Youngest, became the official spokesperson, although there wasn't much I could tell them.

But, unable to leave a puzzle unsolved or a lost puppy unfound, J. Dyanne followed up on Nicole's story later that day. She waited until it was nearly dark, the lull between outdoor daylight play and the cool breezes of nighttime porch sitting. The streetlights had come on, so we dutifully did our check-in at home and then prepared for our search. Naturally, J. Dyanne took provisions with her: a thermos of water, a package of Dog's Gaines-Burger, first aid kit, flashlight all packed in one of Dad's old canvas camera bags. She also brought Dog along, as it only made sense to utilize the assistance of a canine to find a canine. But I was sure she had sensed something else she didn't share. I was convinced when she pretty much went in a straight line to the vacant lot two blocks over.

I didn't much like this area after dark. There were stories that a local gang had buried a body in there. And though I'd never seen one, there was always the threat of rats and/or snakes. It was bad enough in the daytime, with sticker bugs catching on your socks, flies, and mosquitoes and everything else that made me miserable, but now in the near dark of a hazy summer evening, the unseen source of the rustling sounds was unnerving.

At the edge of the vacant lot J. Dyanne turned on the flashlight. She had Buddy's collar in her hand and let Dog sniff it, then followed him with the beam of light as he picked his way through the tall weeds, rocks and general debris. Fortunately, before my courage failed, they found Buddy with his hind legs stuck in the weeds in the middle of the lot. He was tired and dehydrated, unable to do more than whimper when we found him. J. Dyanne pulled away the weeds and scooped up the grateful puppy. Although I thought this was an excellent time to leave this desolate place, J. Dyanne took Buddy to a jumble of large concrete blocks and let him drink from the thermos cap. Since it looked like there was no rush to leave, I decided to get some answers.

"Okay, spill the beans," I said. "How did you know he was here?"

J. Dyanne didn't answer right away. She was busy crumbling up the Gaines-Burger for Buddy and Dog. "It wasn't a dream. It was something else, right? Something about the collar." J. Dyanne finally looked up, while absently stroking Buddy's head.

"You're becoming very observant, Katrin. I take it you noticed my reaction when I first touched it?" I nodded. She took her time pouring more water for the dogs. She wasn't avoiding the issue. It was more like processing it, like when she would talk through one of her math problems.

"That was the first time it happened so clearly. Sometimes I can feel some kind of energy when I touch things. It's vague mostly. But this time, I saw a bunch of pictures in my mind. Interesting."

She rose. There was music coming from the porch of the closest residence and the laughter of a group of kids carried over from the corner. The dinner hour was over and the kids were back out. J. Dyanne tucked away the provisions, gathered up Buddy and handed me the flashlight.

"I'm not taking him back now for everybody to see." I understood her reluctance; she didn't need any more attention. We went home via a shortcut through the alley and installed Buddy on the back porch. Mom was okay with our plan to return him to Nicole's doorstep, anonymously, just after dawn the next day. We hoped this would defer suspicion. I almost ruined it by attaching Buddy's collar, but J. Dyanne reminded me that this would be a dead giveaway, since everyone saw her take the collar into the house. In the early dawn, we made the drop and got away without being seen. But we failed to consider the imaginative desire to believe in magic.

When the news of Buddy's seemingly miraculous return swept through the neighborhood, no one doubted that J. Dyanne had more or less conjured the puppy from thin air. Buddy's ecstatic joy when he next saw J. Dyanne didn't help. All doubters were now convinced, and Nicole Trotter became J. Dyanne's most adoring fan. It was a very good thing we'd soon be back in school. Kids wouldn't have time to follow us around ready to witness amazing psychic activity.

As the stifling dog days of summer began to flame out into fall, new stories took over and we were soon left in relative peace. The events during the final week of August gave people something else to talk about.

The big news, shown daily on television, was the rioting downtown. The whole world watched the police battle protesters,

passersby and news media with tear gas, mace and clubs. Oh, and there was a political convention going on too.

The Female Teen Elder Other became infatuated with Georgia State Representative, Mr. Julian Bond and was inspired to go over to Grant Park and “get involved.” And though the attractive Mr. Bond held a special place in her heart, the vibes at the Park were much too volatile and she left before any of the day’s rioting started. She was thrilled when he was nominated to be the first black vice-president. But, alas, at 28 years old, he was too young.

Since all media eyes were focused downtown, J. Dyanne and I were left undisturbed while enjoying our last days of preparation for our annual scholastic endeavors. I would be entering my sixth year of study and J. Dyanne, her eighth. But there was one more hurdle to overcome.

The Labor Day weekend. This meant family gatherings, which could be very trying. The first of these was the raucous weekly Saturday night party, otherwise known as a bridge game, hosted by *pater* and *mater familias*.

Relatives from the maternal side of the family attended this bridge game. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, family friends... lots of hearty drinking, eating, signifying and, of course, card playing all taking place under the combined haze of cigar, cigarette and pipe smoke. They were the loudest games of bridge I have ever witnessed.

The good news for J. Dyanne and myself was that this week Aunt Gina, mom’s eldest sister, brought cousins Marcus and Victor with her and they would spend the night. Also good was the non-appearance of the other cousins, courtesy of Mom’s younger brother, Uncle David — the eight-year-old terrible twins, Darla and Darlene.

On the surface, they looked like prim and proper Catholic-school girls, but underneath, well... let me just say, if anything went wrong, went missing, or was broken, you could safely say “the twins did it” with a 99% rate of accuracy. We usually saw them only on holidays like Christmas or Easter, so these Saturday night gatherings were twin-free and we could play gin rummy and pop popcorn without distractions. Then on Sunday morning we’d get to eat the leftover barbecue or fried shrimp and watch cartoons while everyone else slept late.

This Saturday the stirring events of the prior week were the topic of much loud talk in between heated analyses of bids made and hands played. Sporadic debates erupted about the chaos of the

convention, the mass media coverage and whether or not all the protesting made any difference. A major tangent was a discussion about who actually elects the president. As usual at these times, I was sent to get the World Book Encyclopedia to prove or disprove someone's point. That night, it was to look up the entry on the Electoral College and read it aloud.

After the reading set off another round of debate, Aunt Velma, mom's next elder sister, pulled me aside and gave me a bourbon-scented hug.

"That's my little niece," she said. "Saw you on the TV. You should be one of them newscasters." Then, she pulled me closer, whispering in my ear.

"Where's your sister? She alright?"

"Yeah, she's fine. She's upstairs, painting. Why?"

"Just checking. She's about that age, you know." Actually, I didn't know what she meant. But she continued.

"You just... just take care, alright? You're the baby, but you gotta take care of her, alright? Alright?"

She seemed worried, so I assured her I would take care of J. Dyanne and she let me go, heading to the kitchen for another drink. I thought no more about her queries and joined J. Dyanne and the cousins to watch television.

This Sunday, there would be no cartoons. The overpowering heat of the previous week had been replaced with a cooling intermittent drizzle and gray clouds shaded the glaring sun. And, much to J. Dyanne's dismay, it was the day of the annual DuBois Family Reunion. She had been able to get through the influx of the maternal Watkins relatives on Saturday night by alternately watching television and painting, alone, upstairs.

Our room was still cluttered with the residual debris of a particularly complex foray into art. A notable artist in her own right, J. Dyanne humored the whims of the well-intentioned Great Aunt Alis — the aunt to whom she could, apparently, converse with in her dreams — by actually using the paint-by-number kits Alis occasionally sent to the premises at 7541. It was a kind thought, even though J. Dyanne completely disregarded the number scheme, painted well outside the lines, and generally exceeded the artistic level one would expect from such juvenile pursuits. In return, Alis had the completed pieces properly framed and placed proudly throughout her home.

The plan was to present the completed artwork to Great Aunt Alis that afternoon. This would be the highlight of an otherwise

dismal day for J. Dyanne.

The annual Dubois family gathering took place in Washington Park the Sunday before Labor Day. Today. Our father had come from a large and continuously fruitful family. J. Dyanne was never completely at ease in their company, especially when gathered en masse. Hers was a consistently misunderstood personality. When pensive, enjoying the beauty of nature, she was thought to be aloof and unapproachable. And when able to clarify obscure points in adult conversations, she was considered to be, and I quote, a “smarty-pants.” And as patience was not her strongest virtue, foolishness in others was not easily tolerated. Since society deemed her far too young to voice any such criticism of her elders, she mostly sat in stony silence while in their company. Not a recipe for good times.

However, Great Aunt Alis Graham-Andrews, whom the unkind amongst our cousins dubbed ‘Gaa-Ga,’ was an eccentric, and that made her interesting. Well into her 60s, Alis maintained a home in the city and a little cabin in the woods of Wisconsin where she spent her summers. And though her DuBois connection was through her sister’s marriage to our Dad’s father, she always returned to the city during the Labor Day weekend for the DuBois reunion. Aunt Alis did her own home maintenance, gardening, cooking and cleaning. She also liked to claim her preference of keeping her assets liquid — she disdained banks and kept her money hidden in secret stashes around the house. She took showers in the rain and told fabulous stories when she was in the mood. She was a fascinating Great Aunt, so J. Dyanne was usually eager to show her the result of her artistic endeavors.

As I entered our room though, J. Dyanne was staring balefully at the completed canvas. I was unsure of her unease; the painting was good. Perhaps it was the weather, which looked like it could easily end up in a downpour, thus canceling the event. However, considering her feelings about being with the DuBois folks, it didn’t really explain the mood.

“Dyanne,” I ventured. “Is something the matter?”

She merely looked at me. “The painting turned out really well,” I prompted.

“It’s not that,” she replied. “Just feeling... a bit crowded today.”

I didn’t fully comprehend this response, but wanting to clear the heaviness in the room, replied, “Not to worry. Once in the park, you’ll be able to stretch out.”

“Not today.” She looked out the window. The drizzle was on

pause at the moment. "No park today."

Maybe she was thinking that with the recent rioting in the parks, it would be closed. But we had pretty much avoided that kind of thing on the South Side. Or, perhaps...

"Have you been having... dreams? With Aunt Alis?" J. Dyanne let out the tiniest of sighs.

"That's just it... I haven't. At least nothing coherent."

Maybe the weather was affecting her signals or vibes or something. At any rate, I had come upstairs to choose my wardrobe for the day. The reunion was an event I actually enjoyed and always took great care in choosing the appropriate attire. But if there were to be no sojourn in the park because of rain, I'd need to re-think my ensemble.

"You think it'll be cancelled cause of a rainout?" I asked.

"Not exactly." She said nothing more, so I took this to mean that I should continue with my plans.

"You're just uneasy about being around the DuBois clan all afternoon. The rain will stop and we can sneak off to the DuSable Museum with Marcus and Victor. That'll soothe you." A disinterested shrug was all the response I received.

I chose a Mom-made yellow and white vertically-striped cotton ensemble and began working on a suitable hairstyle. J. Dyanne, who disdained excess fuss about her appearance, had chosen jeans, T-shirt and one of her numerous hats. As we left to join the others downstairs, I remarked that she had left the painting, but she merely shook her head and continued out the door. Shrugging, I followed. Downstairs, Marcus and Victor were eating cereal while *mater familias* packed foodstuffs for the park.

"You might as well leave it all on the table," J. Dyanne murmured. "There's no rush."

She was told to hush and pack bottles of pop in the cooler.

"No one ever listens to me," she sighed. I felt she was developing a slight Cassandra complex. And I suppose she had reason, considering the number of times we let her remarks pass unheeded, even with plentiful evidence of her prescience. However, like the legendary Cassandra, the cursed seer of Greek mythology, J. Dyanne bore the burden and didn't complain. Much.

And then, the doorbell rang. The front doorbell. J. Dyanne and I exchanged looks. This couldn't be good, I thought. And so it proved.



Valerie C. Woods

Biography

An avid reader while growing up on Chicago's South Side, Ms. Woods began writing when, as a struggling actress in New York, she couldn't find suitable audition material for women of color. This led her to write a book of audition monologues, *Something for Everyone (50 Original Monologues)*. The book was initially self-published and is now published by renowned theatrical play publisher, Samuel French, Inc. (www.VCWoods.com)

After adapting an average play into a better screenplay, Ms. Woods was awarded a Walt Disney Screenwriting Fellowship and followed that up with writing and producing on network and cable drama series such as *Under One Roof*, *Touched By An Angel*, *Promised Land*, *Any Day Now* and *Soul Food*.

But fiction, her first love, compelled her to enter the world of prose. She had always written bits of fiction, short stories and a little poetry here and there.

In November 2012, Ms. Woods founded a micro-press: BooksEndeependent, LLC (www.BooksEndeependent.com) to support her work and the work of other new, independent authors of fiction and non-fiction.

The first title was Ms. Woods' novella, *I Believe... A Ghost Story for the Holidays*. (Amazon.com) Then, what began as a gift became her second publication.

Several years ago, needing a birthday present for her sister Ms. Woods wrote a short story about a girl detective -- a highly fictionalized autobiography of the adventures she and her sister experienced in childhood. Another story was written for Christmas, then one for Mother's Day. That's when Ms. Woods realized she was writing the kind of novel she and her sister would have loved to read as children, but which didn't exist -- the adventures of African-American Girl Detectives!

The result, *Katrin's Chronicles: The Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne, Vol. 1* is now available in paperback and Kindle edition at Amazon.com.

Sample Interview with author ...

Valerie C. Woods

"Katrin's Chronicles: The Canon of Jacqueline Dyanne, Vol.1"

1) You've had a very successful career as a television writer. How is writing a novel different than writing an episode of television?

Both forms of writing require specific writing skills. What's common to both is telling a good story. When writing for television the storyteller utilizes dialogue, great characters, action and interesting settings to convey the complexities of the story. And though dialogue is very important, television is a visual medium. Whenever possible, "show" rather than "tell" the audience. The writer needs to know what will successfully play onscreen, in a visual sense, and what is better played in dialogue. And also, write in such a way that the director, the actor's, casting, set design and everyone else involved in bringing it to the screen can visualize the world from your script.

When writing a novel, the work of the author is to use prose to create the entire world in the mind's eye of the reader. The author does the casting, set design, special effects, location scouting, directing, the reshoots, editing (at least the first pass!), all with the power of prose.

I remember the first time I was on set for a script I'd written. It was wonderful to see it come together, often just as you imagined. And, I love hearing from readers who became immersed in a world I'd created in a book. It's all good!

2) Did you read a lot as a kid? Have you always been interested in "genre" (mysteries, SF, fantasy, etc.) material? Name your favorite book and author from when you were Katrin's age, and explain why it appealed to you so much.

As a child, reading was one of my favorite pastimes. I saw my share of television, too. But it wasn't until I was an adult that I realized my mom limited our television viewing. Television was never our "babysitter." But we could read to our heart's content. And although we were athletic and active kids, especially in the summertime, some of my best memories are about sitting on our back porch reading. One time, I was there reading a book called "The Sherwood Ring" -- about a modern day girl on a lonely estate where she becomes acquainted with the ghosts of

her colonial ancestors. I was so completely in that world, I had no clue my picture was being taken, until my sister showed me the photograph.

I never thought of myself as having an interest in “genre” material, but when I look at my childhood reading list, then I guess that’s exactly what I read. Aside from literary classics like “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” or “The Secret Garden,” there were my genre favorites, like “A Wrinkle in Time,” “Encyclopedia Brown,” Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christie, The Merlin Trilogy, Nancy Drew, Harriet the Spy. And I remember the first book I read that didn’t have illustrations was called “The Ghost.”

And, looking back to the 1960s, I also realize the absence of adventure stories featuring people who looked like me. I didn’t question it then, but now, I’m like, where are the black girl detectives? That’s one of the main reasons why I wrote Katrin’s Chronicles. The other is that I needed a birthday gift for my sister, so I wrote her a short, and wildly exaggerated, story about us growing up.

3) How much of this book is autobiographical and how much is pure fiction? Name a few parts that are examples of each.

"That’s kind of hard to say. I was the same age as Katrin in this time period and was the youngest in the family, living on Chicago’s South Side. I have an older sister who is very smart and very intuitive. And we did have adventures in which she was the organizer and leader, when we were young. So the basic bones of the book are taken from my personal history. And a great deal is straight from my imagination.

For instance, my sister and I were big readers and visited the library often. My mother was the church secretary at our local church and my father did work construction. However, the experience the characters have at the Central Library is pure fiction, there was never an alleged kidnapping plot with the church minister’s son, and my father, well now that I think about it, he was pretty much the man I wrote about."

4) Why do you think kids growing up in the 21st century will be interested in stuff that went on in the 1960's? Which stuff in particular, and why?

"As a child of the '60s I certainly enjoyed reading novels about kids my age from historical time periods. A favorite book of mine was “Johnny Tremain” as was Mary Stewart’s Merlin trilogy that started with “The Crystal Cave” and tells of Merlin as a child into young adulthood.

What I related to in these stories were relationships, struggles, politics, rivalries, heroes and villains – they all existed then and they still do in each generation. The details may change, but the essence of truth, of good vs. evil, these are eternal truths and it was helpful to me to know that kids like me got through tough times then and I could get through any tough times now.

There is a young woman who did an advance review of the book. She noted certain things in the book were still true today. For instance, at one point Katrin's Mom says, "You two are stronger than I was at your age. Tougher. I guess you have to be these days." This 14-year-old reviewer wrote in the margin '[This is] what people say now, in 2013 as well.'

To young people in 2013, the childhood of many adults (the 1960's) is a historical era they don't much know about.

The times were on edge in the 60s and they are again in 2013. Though the characters in the book are not directly involved in the national issues, they do become involved locally. I hope the story shows young people they can contribute at whatever level to which they have access. And, most importantly, to trust the wisdom of their inner voice."

5) How is the city of Chicago like a non-speaking character in the book?

Ah, Chicago! I loved growing up in Chicago. And it was because of my parents. They raised us to explore, reach out, be independent and recognize that our neighborhood is also part of a much bigger world and to not be afraid to access that larger world. My father especially loved the city. As a construction worker he had jobs in a lot of different areas. Like most Chicagoans, we'd spend summer days at the lake, or visit Buckingham Fountain at night to see the multi-colored light display. And, like in the book, we made trips to see the Christmas displays on State St. at Carson Pirie Scott or Marshall Field's Department Stores.

Chicago landmarks are fascinating to me, especially the old Water Tower that survived the great Chicago Fire of 1871. The city is known for its architecture. In 1968, the Hancock Building was still being built. There was no Sears Tower yet, but we have family photos of pictures taken at Buckingham Fountain, (I think all Chicagoans do!) in front of the Museum of Science & Industry, Jackson Park Beach, Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, the list goes on.

Chicago's identity was mirrored in each of us. It anchored us. And Chicago also has an attitude like no other city. And I hope the characters reflect that. It would be an entirely different story if set in a different city.