

An Interview with Lisa Lickel

April 2009 Featured Author

at

Time with Tannia

(<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>)

By:

Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés



1. Tell us about yourself

I live and write in beautiful Wisconsin. My journey of a professional writing career began in the last moments of the twentieth century.... I'm primarily a historian, wife and mother. When I had a part time church secretary position, I signed up for the Christian Writer's Guild apprentice course. When my classmate, Laurel Salton Clark, was killed in the space shuttle accident, I wrote about her for my local newspaper. I continue to freelance with varying success. My husband and I have two grown boys, one daughter-in-law and one almost daughter-in-law (wedding in June). I enjoy teaching Sunday School, travel, working on craft projects including quilts and reading.

My website is: <http://lisalickel.com>. **My blogsite is:**

<http://livingourfaithoutloud.blogspot.com>.

You can contact me through the address on my website: lisalickel@netzero.net.

2. How did the knowledge acquired during your Christian Writer's Guild Course influence and sharpen your writing? Would you recommend this course to other writers?

The Christian Writers Guild course was a great start in basic training, a means to learn the little tidbits of professionalism from people who are in the business. It was an invaluable lesson on how not to shoot yourself in the foot, so to speak, and how to approach the craft. I learned that one of the reasons it's so difficult to get published is that practically everyone wants to write, wants to strike it rich, and thinks that he or she has the next best seller, instead of taking the time to learn to write appropriately and properly. I definitely recommend the course with a caveat: it's very expensive and will take two years.

3. You have written and produced for radio theater and performed live, too. Which of these roles do you prefer and why? Share with us one of your performance bloopers and how did you recover. A triumphant moment?

I love radio theater! I don't memorize well, so reading from a script is fantastic. It probably sounds funny, "perform live" in radio, but our company takes shows on the road once in a while and does perform in front of audiences while taping the show for later broadcast, podcast and sale. Audiences love to see the sound effects being done to accompany the actors. I don't think I prefer either writing or acting – I enjoy them both. Part of acting is producing the background sound, which is also a great deal of fun.

Favorite blooper: In the very first show that I performed in, my character was to come in screaming. I used to practice screaming in my car as I drove to rehearsals and performances (it hurts now to think of it). In one of the live performances the stage was very close to the audience, and one woman in the front row jumped a mile when I approached the mic, screeching. I sort of suspected that might happen, but there wasn't much else I could do. Luckily, she laughed.

4. What type of literary work is aired at FreeQuincy Radio Theater's podcast site? How often do you contribute to their programming?

If you consider the theatrical genre literary, you can find contemporary comedic shows, classics, horror, and historical pieces, as well as original and previously produced theater. FreeQuincy has taken some time off in the last two years while our producer had a couple of kids and has been working on his advanced education. We're working on a colleague's adaptation of a gangster-era book to script. We are hoping to begin producing a serial sometime next year. I'll contribute more to the serial, a comedy called "As the Neuron Turns," then, as I have time.

5. As a freelancer, you have published in a variety of newspapers and magazines. Which is your preferred media outlet; newspapers or magazines, and why? Where did you publish your first professional article?

My first professional sale was a magazine article on our women's group at church which was published in my national church magazine. It was a course assignment from CWG. Magazines are hard to target and often require a specialization in order to garner continuous professional assignments to make it pay. If you are very good and develop an audience, it's a great-paying gig. I enjoyed the newspaper work, but we're seeing the end of an era, I think, as print medium downsizes and gets swallowed by the electronic age. I loved writing features on local people because I could be positive and find ways to portray good things, but I found it difficult to approach strangers, even when they were expecting

my call. Making phone calls was a lot harder than showing up somewhere for a pre-arranged visit.

6. Many associate historical societies with people with strange habits. Do you agree with this presumption? Briefly explain to our readers the purpose of these societies and its overall contribution to society.

This is the “I hate history” question, isn’t it? Strange? Well, there are strange people everywhere, like the people who read your stuff and feel like they absolutely have to call you and tell you how stupid or how fantastic it was. I suppose the fact that I think basements and attics are awesome and I spent a Valentine’s day afternoon a few years back cleaning raccoon scat from the stairwell of this house one my historical society groups is restoring is pretty strange. It was easier to remove frozen. Really. Historical societies are a way for people to connect with why things are the way they are now. If you can understand where someone came from and how she or he had to adapt, you can forgive a lot, as well as prepare yourself to expect almost anything and to rejoice in our differences. History doesn’t mean just a hundred or a thousand years ago. History was this morning.

7. You have done extensive traveling; all 49 continental states and the Soviet Union. Were these trips for business or pleasure? If they were for business, what type of information did you gather and for that purpose? If they were for pleasure, which place did you enjoy the most, the least, and why?

I don’t really think business describes any of my journeys. My father was a history teacher who sometimes took classes at different universities around the states in the summer. We also just liked to travel. I was fortunate that my husband likes to travel as well, although we’ve got different tastes. The Soviet Union trip was in 1981, right after the US boycotted the Moscow Olympics, and was part of a university seminar. What I enjoyed the most? Probably two places at opposite edges of North America: one, the Kluane Range in Canada/Alaska. The fact that there remains a place on earth that no human (probably) has ever been is haunting. The other is in Nova Scotia on the Bay of Fundy. The tidal motion there is an incredible experience. What I enjoyed the least? Ach, I’m getting older and for some reason I developed a discomfort at heights. My husband adores Glacier Park in Montana. That Going to the Sun Road thing is for the birds. Clinging off the edge of the cliff to get from one point to the other is just not an experience I’m excited to repeat. My mantra, with my eyes closed, was “millions of people travel on this road every year...”

8. Your first novel, *Heartsong Presents: Mysteries: The Gold Standard* is scheduled to be released in January 2009. The book title implies a quest to find purity and perfection in mysterious places. Share with our readers what triggered the story. How do the main characters accomplish the given task?

The story was triggered by the idea of unraveling a code – follow the clues left by a relative to find something that was lost and right misconceptions. Along the way the main characters learn that faith is more than just going through the motions, that believing in God includes the gift of forgiveness for past hurts, no matter how long the grudge was harbored. One of my neighbors has a gold hunting story that gave rise to part of the mystery in the book, and that’s all I can reveal now. The main characters accomplish the task of revealing the murder and finding the lost treasure through diligent attention to each

other and to a series of events that followed one upon the other.

9. Your second book, "*Healing Grace*" (2009 Zumaya Publishing) is based on true events tells the story of a perseverance, faith, healing, and total surrender to God's will. What events in your life had a pivotal effect and hearten your desire to write this story?

Healing Grace is really a story of "what if," like all of my work. Again, it had its origins in a lesson from CWG, as far as developing a plot and characters. I wanted to explore the idea of how people interpret the gifts of the Spirit in today's world. There is an unfortunate controversy regarding revelation and use of the gifts, some of which are mentioned in I Corinthians 12. Why are some people willing to accept that some parts of scripture are relevant in our lives today and others, not so much? What would happen if we employed the spiritual gift of healing? What would it look like? I also admit to a fascination with studying reports of somatic reactions as a result of spiritual rapture, like the people who physically manifest the wounds of Christ. I put the two of them together – with a twist. Who can say what the mind is capable of? Do you have to believe in either of these concepts to enjoy my novel? No. It's a novel. I had once thought I might explore more of the spiritual gifts in subsequent Grace stories, but I haven't pursued that avenue.

My brother developed a terrible infection of his nervous system, and as I researched his symptoms in an effort to understand what was happening to him, I was able to come up with a disease for my character in my book. Fortunately, my brother has recovered quite a bit. His whole family shared with me about what makes their life in Michigan special, and my sister-in-law in particular came up with the idea of the Petoskey stone.

10. Why did you choose Zumaya Publishing to publish your second book? Where the publishing terms better than other publishers?

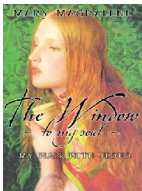
I mean no disrespect, but by the time my first agent said "Grace has run out of grace" I wasn't willing to give up. I love this story and I think there are some great issues to explore. I continued to ask for recommendations for publishers from my writing buddies, and searched all of the small presses that other authors had used. Zumaya has the most succinct and frightening submission guidelines I have yet run across. I thought that at least submitting would be good practice. I knew that the editor was reading for acquisitions two years in advance, and a year after submitting my proposal, she asked for the manuscript and then agreed to publish it. I had no other responses at that time. The terms are quite generous in regard to ownership. There are going to be some issues with other aspects of the line. A couple of Christian authors pulled out. I needed to think about how badly I wanted to be published and what going with a company who also has a GLBT and erotic line might mean for my career. I talked about it and prayed with friends, and no one said I shouldn't do it. Elizabeth Burton, the acquisition editor, has been very kind and I'm delighted that she liked my story.

11. Are you working on new projects?

Always. *Healing Grace* was the second book I ever wrote, and it's taken six years to get it to print. I've written a lot since then, even a series of children's picture historicals, based on the ethnic families that settled in my community in the 1850s (so long ago! :)), from Prussia, Saxony, Luxembourg, and Ireland, and the impact it had on the native Potawatomi population. Right now I'm trying to adapt some of my earlier work to different markets. I have a number of new ideas plotted out for novels, but we'll see what happens this year.

12. A word of advice to new writers.

New writers: Please, do yourself a favor and find a mentor. This is not a business you can succeed in all by yourself. Decide what you really want to accomplish with writing. Are you out to please yourself, your family and friends, or God? If the only person you need to impress is your grandchild, be content and use Instant Print. Do your homework. Find out what makes a good story, and it may not be the first one you came up with, so accept that and either make it better or go on to something else. I adore the first series of novels I wrote for adults. The first book even did very well in a contest, but I don't know whether or not it will ever be published. Learn how to tell it and who to tell it to. Always grow. Always be open to connect with people, go to conferences and workshops and other author's book signings. Be kind. Be courteous. Life is short.



Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés, author of *The Window To My Soul; My Walk With Jesus* (ISBN 0975393359; 2004 Tate Publishing; www.tatepublishing.com).
Author's websites: timewithtannia.tripod.com, www.shoutlife.com/tanniaortizlopes, and www.myspace.com/tanniaortizlopes. The author also has a blog at www.amazon.com

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INTERVIEW COMMENTS:

Date Received:: April 1, 2009 7:15:10 AM EST

Name: Lisa Lickel

Comments: Thank you, Tannia! I'll check in periodically this month.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Dawn

Email Address: (optional) dawnsromancewrite@yahoo.com

Where did you hear about this interview? ILisa

Comments: I enjoyed how the interview covered interesting aspects for readers and writers.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Kyle

Comments: Thanks for letting me proofread your work, mom. I can't wait to read more!

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Jennifer Weiley

Where did you hear about this interview? email

Comments: Personable and real approach to writing. Thanks!

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Darlene Stern

Where did you hear about this interview? from Lisa

Comments: I always am satisfied when all my 'why' questions are answered, and this interview answered many, some of which I hadn't even thought of! I appreciate an author taking the time to write about the gifts of Holy Spirit from an objective perspective, rather than a pro or con perspective. I look forward to having the opportunity to read Healing Grace. Lisa is indeed an encourager; she's given me direction more than once and I am grateful for her input. Because of her contributions, I've transitioned from just hoping to be published to being published -even if it is an emagazine, it's still a beginning.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Deb Baker

Web site URL: (optional) <http://www.debbakerbooks.com>

Comments: Great interview! And your advice to new writers is right on.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Christine Schmidt

Comments: It was an interesting interview. I loved the question about the odd people interested in history. Good answer too!

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Tammy Barley

Web site URL: (optional) www.tammybarley.com

Where did you hear about this interview? From Lisa Lickel

Comments: The Gold Standard has that rare quality that keeps you reading long past when you should have turned off the lights. It's a keeper, a book I'll enjoy reading again and again. Few authors achieve that.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Ann-Eliza Schrock

Email Address: (optional) schrock.ann@gmail.com

Where did you hear about this interview? via the Internet

Comments: "The Gold Standard" is also a good picture of life in the US Midwest. Good interview, Lisa and Tannia. I enjoyed reading about the Radio Theater, too. I think Lisa has a gift for encouragement which comes through in her work.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Allan E. Ansorge

Email Address: (optional) aansorge1307@charter.net

Web site URL: (optional) <http://aeansorge.com>

Comments: Marvelous interview, does a good job of showing the quality person and what a fine author Lisa is.

Date Received: April 1, 2009

Name: Sharon A. Lavy

Email Address: (optional) sharonalavy@gmail.com

Web site URL: (optional) <http://sharonlavy.blogspot.com/>

Where did you hear about this interview? a friend from ACFW

Comments: This is a great story of perseverance and encourages me to keep pressing on. Thank You

Date Received: April 2, 2009 8:49:11 AM EST

Name: Diana Susen

Where did you hear about this interview? email

Comments: Even though I have known Lisa for more than two decades, I enjoyed reading more about the author in Lisa. I always assumed Lisa's strengths were her commitment to family and community, as she has been an active volunteer with wonderful cooperative spirit. Locally known for her writing ability by undertaking projects that protect and collect local history, I am proud that Lisa has now stepped out and become recognized for her talents globally. I am overjoyed to see her passion become a reality. It is evident that today's society is becoming more spiritual. There couldn't be a better time to be releasing your newest book, "Healing Grace". Good luck Lisa.

Date Received: April 3, 2009 6:52:44 AM EST

Name: Lisa Lickel

Comments: Thank you everyone who's responded so far - even though I value your friendship, both personal and business already, it's certainly nice to read. No questions? Oh - there was one off-site: Tannia and I met through Shoutlife.com. It's a great organization.