

## Julie A. Swayze

Fiction Writer

For as far back as she can remember, maybe even in her past lives, Julie Anne Swayze has always loved scary things – movies like *The Bride of Frankenstein*, novels like *Nature's End* by Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka, short stories like Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart*, and even television shows like *Friday the Thirteenth*.

If Julie was a character in one of her own books she would be Wren Moss, from her first published novel, *Seth's Dominion*. "Wren was a strong character," Julie says, "yet, she has many faults." Of course Julie wouldn't mind being Anne Riveson either, the heroine from her current novel, *O'Reilly's Ring*. Julie describes Anne as "pretty fearless."

If real life was fiction, Julie would travel back and forth through time, and her house in Pasadena, California, would be haunted by the previous owner. Fact or fiction? Julie says strange things really have happened in the house. "One night I saw a man standing by the kitchen sink. I was sure it was the previous owner. Once we finished decorating, he seemed to approve, and I haven't seen him since." When Julie and her husband moved into their current house, they had a priest from the local parish come and bless the house. "Since I was a little girl, every house that we have ever lived in, my parents had blessed," Julie remembers. "My mother would contact a local priest who would sprinkle holy water and say several prayers throughout the house. I figured after 100 years, I didn't want anyone's bad karma lingering around my 1909 house."

Strange household sightings notwithstanding, the paranormal events about which Julie writes take place only in her imagination. "Writing for me is like watching a movie unfold," she says. "When I sit down at the computer, the story picks up from where I left it last."

For Julie, it began with a creative writing class in high school. Then she became interested in poetry and short stories. While her childhood surroundings – San Francisco in the 1960's – often seemed surreal, and sparked her already vivid imagination, it was probably voodoo that tipped the balance. "My father's family is from Louisiana, and there were so many great stories dealing with what I called 'Louisiana folklore'. Tales of visits from dead relatives; objects moving across the room on their own. I wanted to write about that world."

Mother's premonitions were most likely an influence as well. "Mother always knew about news before it happened. For example, if someone were pregnant, she would dream of the expectant mother holding a large fish, or if someone was to have major change in their lives, she would see them standing in a room, and a large ocean wave would crash into the room, changing everything. She also dreamed of death and hard times, seeing muddy swimming pools or ponds, where you could not see the bottom."

And that was not the end of Julie's mother's influence. Julie's first full-length manuscript was written on the strongest dare – "I'm going to write a book" she said to her mother one long and boring summer after her sophomore year in college "You'll never finish it," her mother replied. Julie completed "Valley of the Shadow Warrior" – all 600 handwritten pages – before the fall semester began.

But as much as she enjoyed writing, she never thought of it as a career. After college, she thought about applying to work for the CIA, but instead, she went to work in retail store management, where she found the stress and the workload to be intense. "Writing has always been an outlet for me. I began writing to relieve stress, and to create a world that was far different from the retail environment."

But why science fiction? She credits her older sister Sharon, an avid reader who first introduced her to the genre and the works of an author named Joe Halderman. "When I read his 'Forever War' series," Julie remembers, "it literally changed what I wanted to do for a living. He had created a world that was so believable and so real, I wanted to live there. I wanted to create fiction like he did." Halderman is definitely Julie's all time favorite author.

The sisterly exchanges still continue today. "Even now, my sister and I will call each other and talk for hours about books we've read, or books we would like to read. We both love books that are written with strong female characters, women as main characters, not just window dressing." Julie cites "They Came to Baghdad," by Agatha Christie, which she read as a teenager. "I remember thinking, 'Women can be strong and have adventures.' After that, I read another one by Agatha, 'The Man in the Brown Suit.' I was hooked." Julie describes Agatha Christie's main character, Victoria Jones, as "a heroine with 'spunk;' she is intelligent, strong, and funny." The influence is clear. In "O'Reilly's Ring," Anne Riveson, is a spunky, fearless, thirty-five year old African-American woman leads a team of paranormal investigators back in time to Ireland of two centuries ago.

Again, Julie's sister provides some inspiration. "When I wrote 'O'Reilly's Ring' I wanted to write a story about a team of paranormal investigators. I wanted to know how they would react if one of their own were involved in paranormal activity. My sister loves stories that deal with time-travel, so I had to weave time-travel into this story, as homage to her. The story is filled with all sorts of twists and turns for me this is the type of story that is the most fun to read, and certainly the most fun to write."

Fun is the key word. Like most fiction writers, and readers, Julie likes to imagine a world where she could assume someone else's life, or just try it on for size. In Julie's first published novel, 'Seth's Dominion,' she imagines a world where Nanotechnology is possible. "I like to take my readers in a world that is simple and limitless. I don't feel that I need to deal with any pressing issues of today such as race, class, and political affiliation. In my world the characters have moved beyond that and are dealing with other issues."

Julie Anne Swayze lives in Pasadena with her husband and two cats. "O'Reilly's Ring" is her second published novel.

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