



JF: When did you first start reading Nancy Drew books?

CC: I read them from about age 8 to age 12. They played a major part of my formative years, to the exclusion of almost every other kind of book. If Nancy Drew wasn't in it, I probably wasn't interested.

JF: Do you still read them? Or Collect them?

CC: I hadn't read a Nancy Drew book since I was a kid until I decided to write this book and ended up re-reading several dozen. I do collect them, though I am not a very thorough or careful collector. I still have a good portion of the original set I had as a kid (the yellow hard covers 1-56), which I took to college with me and then to graduate school. They were displayed prominently next to my political science text books and confessional poetry, which always raised eyebrows when I had guests.

JF: Why do you like Nancy Drew?

CC: Nancy was always so absolutely capable and everyone had so much confidence in her. She had independence and freedom, but also the comfort of a nice home and a father who loved her. Her life was nothing like mine (she was more popular, more level-headed), yet I loved experiencing her world. I also think a big part of her appeal was that there seemed to be an endless supply of adventures. One would not have been enough to satisfy my compulsive approach to reading—I needed a series that I could lose myself in for years.

JF: What is your most favorite thing about Nancy Drew or the series?

CC: I think that Nancy Drew has turned generations of girls into readers.

JF: What is your favorite and least favorite Nancy Drew book?

CC: My favorite book is *Mystery of the Glowing Eye*. I had a huge attachment to it as a kid. (I am embarrassed to confess that the copy I have in my current library is one I checked out from the Bellingham Public Library when I was nine.) Ned is kidnapped by nefarious forces and sends a note to Nancy in a helicopter that crashes into Nancy's backyard. She spends the rest of the book tracking him down. I always liked the books where Ned got himself abducted and Nancy had to rescue him.

JF: Which Nancy Drew character do you most resemble personality wise—Nancy, Bess, George, Helen?

CC: Togo.

JF: Describe Nancy in 5 words or less.

CC: Plucky. Brave. Clever. Confident. Capable.

JF: Original text fan or revised text fan or both?

CC: Both. The originals are better books (smarter, more fleshed-out)—if you can get past the ethnic stereotypes—though I read so many of the revised versions as a kid that I have a sentimental attachment to them. There's something about those yellow covers that still makes me smile.

JF: What led you to write your new novel, *Confessions of a Teen Sleuth*?

CC: A few years ago when there seemed to be all of these books that retold great fiction from another perspective (*The Wind Done Gone*, *Ahab's Wife*), I got to thinking about what fun it would be to retell Nancy's story. (Like any Nancy Drew fan, I was devastated when I learned that Carolyn Keene had never existed.) I thought about the project for a few years and sat down a few times to write. But the tone never seemed right. Then one day I got the right voice in my head. I knew I was on to something because every time I would go to the bookstore and pull down a pile of teen sleuth books to go through I would be immediately approached by a stranger who wanted to reminisce about Tom Swift or Judy Bolton or Trixie Belden with me. (Frankly, it got kind of annoying.) Readers feel a very strong affection for these early protagonists of their youth. While it was hard to let Nancy age (as a fan, I wanted to keep her at 18), there was also something lovely about it. In seeing Nancy Drew as an elderly woman, I felt a strange sort of closure. As if my childhood had finally caught up with me.

JF: Tell us what you like most about your new novel?

CC: It's affectionate, but also (I hope) very, very funny.

JF: Your book included some of the other popular teenage sleuths from series that competed with the Nancy Drew series throughout the years--did you read many of these other series growing up? If so, which one did you like the most outside of Nancy Drew?

CC: I was very loyal to Nancy, but occasionally strayed into The Hardy Boys, Trixie Belden and The Three Investigators. I never liked Cherry Ames as a kid (She was a nurse – boring! Give me a Titian-haired teenager any day), so she was an obvious choice when it came time to find a nemesis for Nancy. I really tried to include as many

other sleuth characters as possible (Joe and Frank Hardy, Cherry Ames, Tom Swift Jr., Encyclopedia Brown, Christopher Cool, etc, as well as cameos by the Dana Girls and the Bobbsey Twins and others). It struck me that once you accepted the fact that Nancy Drew was a real person, it sort of followed that all the characters who populated her general universe were real people as well. Plus including these other characters made it more fun to write, and more fun to read too.

JF: Why did you choose to make Frank Hardy the love of Nancy's life as opposed to Ned?

CC: I always thought that Ned was sort of square and not very supportive of Nancy's adventuring. I wanted to give her someone who was more of a spiritual match, which meant someone who was also a detecting wiz. And I might have been harboring a childhood crush on Frank Hardy (or rather Parker Stevenson, who played Frank in the TV series).

JF: Describe your thoughts on the character of Ned Nickerson.

CC: Dullsville! Is that sacrilege?

JF: As you were writing this parody, what did you find most amusing about the Nancy Drew series?

CC: There's nothing inherently amusing about the series, which I loved growing up. But you can always find humor by exaggerating what's already there. The language of the books is ripe for parody, because it's so recognizably Nancy. "She retorted." "Slim and attractive." There are a lot of verbal ticks. Plus the books are so general (What state is River Heights in? Why does every book seem to take place over summer vacation?) that it's funny to bring in the real world. Once we accept the fact that Nancy Drew really existed, and is a real part of history, it's amusing to imagine how she would interact with real people and in the face of real events.

JF: You seemed to be pointing out in the book, that teenage mystery solving over the years changed drastically--and rather amusingly the characters realized their limitations as they aged and tried to hold onto their youth. Do you think that a modernized Nancy Drew of today's stories has as much staying power as the Nancy of our childhood?

CC: Boy, it's hard to say. One thing I really noticed when I went back and reread all my Nancy Drew books in preparation for writing the book was how much better the old ones were (something that I did not notice as a kid). But I also think that the character of Nancy is evergreen and will continue to captivate girls' imaginations for as long as they churn out books about her.

JF: What do you hope that most readers get out of reading your book?

CC: It's a humor book, so I hope readers laugh out loud. But it's also a love letter to Nancy Drew. So I guess I hope it connects readers to those lazy bookish afternoons of their childhoods, while affectionately poking fun at some of the situations that arise when we let our girl detective grow up and grow old.