

The business of romance

By Don Benjamin, Staff Writer,

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It will come as no surprise to women in their 30s that romance novels account for a quarter of all fiction sales in America, outpacing mysteries, fantasies and science fiction. In 2017 the Romance Writers of America® reported that 82 percent of romance readers are women in the 35-39 age range and most read electronically using Kindle and other devices.

The business of romance is a money-maker. Sources estimate that romance novels generate annual sales of \$1.5 billion. It's a dynamic industry that includes traditional print publishing and self-publishing options as well as many subcategories which range from innocent flirtations to steamy sexual acrobatics.

There is a formula to writing romance. Some writers develop a story in three acts. In the first act, a couple meets but doesn't connect due to some conflict. The budding relationship survives a crisis in act two and everything reaches a satisfying climax in act three. Romance readers have expectations based upon the sub-genre (such as contemporary or historical settings) and the level of intimacy. Some authors keep the sex discreet with a so-called "closed door" format while others leave nothing to the imagination.

Consistent with national trends, western Colorado is (you'll forgive the expression) a hotbed of romance. It's so warm that no fewer than eight romance writers gathered last Saturday at Grand Junction's Barnes & Noble Booksellers store for an afternoon of book signing. The event was co-sponsored by the bookstore and the Romance Writers of Grand Junction. Participating authors were Colorado residents Annabelle Anders, T.L. Christianson, RaeAnne Hadley, J.D. Hart, Christina Hovland, and D.P. Jones along with two women with Delta County connections: Marje Porter, a Cedaredge High School (CHS) alum and Barbra Campbell, a Cedaredge resident.

Marje Porter is a 1972 graduate of CHS who specializes in western historical romance. Her publisher is Wolfpack Publishing of Las Vegas. Her newest book, "Ties of Time," features gentle romance and tells the story of three sisters who are reunited in Cripple Creek during the 1800s. She is a fulltime writer with three published novels and a sequel to "Ties" in the works. Marje and her husband Dan live in Mesa.

Local author Barbra Campbell and her husband Hans live in Cedaredge. She is developing a series of contemporary romance novellas under the banner of "Tales of the Nightie." She has invented a boutique which offers a gift certificate to customers who share their romantic stories. Barbra works with Amazon and other online publishers to promote her books through self-publishing. Her works are on the steamy side and

she is enjoying her journey as she learns more about the publishing business and the art of storytelling. Ideally she'd like to make her writing a full-time profession.

What does the future hold for her?

"I don't know how this will all work out," she said, "I'll just have to turn the page and see what happens."



Photo by Don Benjamin

Love was in the air last Saturday as eight Colorado romance authors signed their works at Grand Junction's Barnes & Noble Booksellers. Front row left to right are RaeAnne Hadley, Marje Porter, D.P. Jones, and Annabelle Anders. Back row left to right are T.L. Christianson, Christina Hovland, J.D. Hart, and Barbra Campbell. Porter and Campbell have Cedaredge connections.