

Augusta novelist Susan P. Mucha has *Southern Cross* roots

During the course of a telephone conversation, Augusta author Susan P. Mucha excuses herself from the interview, promises to call back, and hurries off to her mentoring responsibilities at Immaculate Conception School. Her duties at the inner-city school are ones she takes seriously. "Sister Una got me into it," she explains. "She asked me to go with her to a local Baptist church that had a meeting concerning mentoring. I went with her, but wasn't convinced it would work at Immaculate Conception," Mucha says.

Later, though, Mucha thought they could add teaching to the mentoring program under discussion at the meeting and it would work at the Augusta school. "I have four children," she says, "and I thought there were times when they could have used some help with their school work. So, that's how we began the program at Immaculate Conception."

Author's status

Mucha's arrival at author's status started with a news release she wrote, with the encouragement of the late Sister Mary Moore, CSSR, of Saint Mary on the Hill parish. Mucha sent these reports about Saint Mary's school and church, which Mucha and her family were members of, to *The Southern Cross*. That was in the 1980s. A graduate of Elizabeth Seton High School and of Saint Francis School of Nursing in Pittsburgh, Mucha says she first felt a pull toward writing when she saw her name in print in the diocesan paper.

Encouraged, she began writing for the *Augusta Chronicle* and for *Augusta Magazine*, and became editor of *HealthScope Magazine*. Married to cardiologist Edgardo Mucha, and the mother of two sons and two daughters, Mucha decided that her home's proximity to Augusta State College (now University) was too good an opportunity

to pass up. She enrolled at Augusta State, began taking courses in Spanish and English, and ended up with a double major in those fields of study.

Learning that there was a unique popular fiction writing master's program going into its third year at Seton Hill University, Mucha enrolled in the program. With time divided up into class attendance and periods back home writing, the Augusta resident's graduate degree studies slotted well into her busy life. "Our writing was reviewed periodically by a critique person and by a mentor," she explains. At the conclusion of her studies for her master's degree, Mucha was required to have a full-length, publishable novel to present as her thesis.

Deadly Deception

"Including revisions, it took me about a year and a half," she says, "to write the book." This book, a mystery entitled *Deadly Deception*, has recently been published by Harbor House Publications. With a dual locale of both Augusta, Georgia, and Lima, Peru—both of which the author is familiar with since she lives in Augusta and her husband is from Peru—the book centers on a real-life tragedy that occurred in Peru. "Most of the story takes place in Peru," she says, "though the Masters Golf Tourna-

ment is also involved."

Randall Silver, Tony Lupinski and Pat Piccianelli were among those who mentored Mucha's work while she was attending Seton Hill. "You really need to have your work read by others, by people who will not be afraid to give you their honest opinion," Susan Mucha says, pointing out that if someone says that the book is "fine" or "nice" while it is being written it is not that helpful. Seton Hill offered practical guidelines for those involved in its popular fiction writing program, Mucha notes. The whole business of getting published—how, to find a publisher, how to write a query letter, how to write a synopsis of the story—was an invaluable aspect of the program.

Mucha is now working on another mystery. Asked if this novel will feature the same locations as her first book, Mucha reveals that it will not, that the action will take place in Kiawah Island—where she and her husband reside part of the year—and in Bermuda which she has visited several times. Mucha works on her new book, *Die Before Your Time*, during quiet mornings in her study when she returns from daily Mass. She likes to complete a chapter of the book each time she sits down at the computer. Often, she discusses her work with her doctor husband who gives her insight into medical situations that arise in her current book, such as the cancer two protagonists of her new book are dealing with.

This mystery writer likes to read mysteries, but reads many other types of writing as well. She is presently reading *December Sixth* by Martin Cruz Smith, but avers she loves Isabel Allende's books and is now into Allende's *Daughter of Fortune*. Her "absolutely favorite author" is Ken Follett, author of—among many other works—*A Place Called Freedom*.

Children

Edgardo and Susan Mucha's children are now grown. Son Ted, married to Chrystelle, and father of little Isabelle, is a pacemaker representative. The Muchas' daughter, Maria, and son, Carlos, are attorneys. Daughter Susie is a fourth-year medical student. At this stage of their lives, both Edgardo and Susan are still involved in activities that really matter to them. Susan continues to work with



Photo courtesy of Susan P. Mucha.

Susan P. Mucha

youngsters at Immaculate Conception School in the mentoring program now in its tenth year.

While researching the history of the Augusta school for its accreditation, Mucha says she was assisted by an eighth grade student she was mentoring. "I think he was really surprised by some of the things we learned," she says. "I think it's important for the young black people of today to know about the struggles of those who came before them. It's a vital part of their history."

Active in church and school

As an active member of Saint Mary on the Hill parish in Augusta and a faithful mentor at Immaculate Conception, author Susan P. Mucha balances commitment to church and family with commitment to writing. She teaches English composition at Augusta State University and enjoys teaching others about writing. Last summer, Mucha spoke at a meeting of the American-Canadian Association at Lima, Peru. She plans to conduct a high school workshop in Lima "during Masters week," the first week in April. Besides the mystery described in *Deadly Deception*, there is another mystery involved in Mucha's life: how in the world does she do it all?

Copies of Mucha's book may be obtained through most booksellers or at the Harbor House website, <http://www.harborhousebooks.com>.

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Father Donahue's mother dies

Mary C. Donahue, 72, mother of Father Timothy C. Donahue, pastor of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Augusta, died on January 11 under the care of Hospice Savannah after a long illness.

Mary Curley was born November 28, 1933 in Grand River, Prince Edward Island, Canada, grew up in Boston, and worked in the civil service on Fort Stewart for many years before retiring in 1992. She is preceded in death by her husband of 53 years, William J. Donahue. Survivors are five sons, Daniel, Dennis, Kevin, Father Tim, and Patrick; two daughters and a son-in-law, Kathleen Donahue, and Ellen and Craig Lambert; two brothers and sisters-in-law, Pat and Helen Curley, and Jack and Karen Curley; a sister, Anne Reardon; and two grandsons, Sean Donahue and Canyon Lambert.

Father Donahue celebrated his mother's Funeral Mass on January 14 at Saint Stephen Church, Hinesville. Remembrances: Saint Stephen Catholic Church Building Fund, 399 Woodland Drive, Hinesville, GA 31313 or Hospice Savannah, P. O. Box 13190, Savannah, GA 31416.