

→ PRINTED MATTER: AUTHOR SUSAN P. MUCHA

Crafting Suspense Thrillers from Life Experiences and Surroundings



Susan Mucha has lived the kind of life that makes for best-selling nonfiction. One of nine children, she graduated from nursing school, became an emergency room nurse, and then married. After becoming a mother to four children, she also added the titles of author, magazine columnist, mom-turned-college-student, elementary school mentor and English teacher. Rather than tell her own story, however, she writes novels and is working on her third, following the success of *Deadly Deception* and her latest, *Die Before Your Time*.

Although her works are available electronically, as well as in print, Mucha remains true to the old-school ways: physical books and a passion for reading and writing that she shares with her students and readers. Irony not lost that *verge* interviewed Mucha electronically, but the subject quickly turned to love of the written word in its old-fashioned medium.

VERGE: You call Pittsburgh home, having lived there since childhood, then relocating twice and returning. What brought you to Augusta?

MUCHA: MCG and a fellowship in cardiology for my husband, Edgardo.

VERGE: When did you develop an interest in writing?

MUCHA: In 1984, at the request of then principal, the late Sister Mary Moore, I wrote a piece about St. Mary on the Hill School for *The Southern Cross*, the newspaper for the Diocese of Savannah. When I saw my byline, I was hooked.

VERGE: How did you know you had the talent and skills?

MUCHA: I remember as a senior in high school, I realized I liked to write. But I didn't pursue it. In fact, I went into nursing.

VERGE: Was it innate?

MUCHA: I think all talent, all gifts are innate. Hereditary? Probably. My father, Harold A. Polonus, was a professional writer.

VERGE: Did someone encourage or inspire you?

MUCHA: Encourage? Everybody! My husband, of course, and my children, my mother, my six sisters and two brothers, my friends. Here's a lesson: Never hesitate to offer a word of encouragement. You may never know what it might mean to someone. Inspire? Definitely my dad.

VERGE: What were the steps that led to your writing career, taking you from *The Southern Cross* to Morris Communications?

MUCHA: I'm a graduate of a hospital nursing school, so I had no college credits. I started at ASU (Augusta College, at the time) as a freshman, and graduated with a double major in English and Spanish. Even while in school, I wrote for *The Augusta Chronicle*, *Augusta Magazine* and various other publications, and later served as editor of *Healthscope Magazine*. I then went on to earn my master's in writing popular fiction from Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pa.

VERGE: Did the degree change things in terms of opening more doors for writing opportunities?

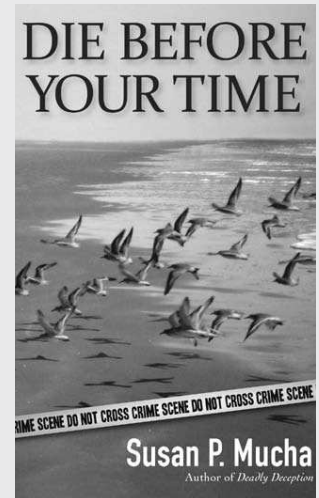
ASHBURN: Actually, when people learned I could write, there were lots of requests to do stories; I don't think it mattered about the degree. What did open doors for me for speaking engagements was the publication of my first book.

VERGE: When did you begin working on your first novel, *Deadly Deception*, and how did you get it published?

MUCHA: While at Seton Hill, I learned how to write a novel. But that's not all; some of the classes entailed how to write query letters to find an agent and publisher and how to market the novel once it's in print. My advice regarding publishing: Write a good story — and revise, revise, revise. Publishers are so careful about who and what they publish today that I suggest to many writers to look into e-publishing. Besides being in print, both of my books are on Kindle and E-Pub.

VERGE: Did you intend to create characters that would carry over into *Die Before Your*

Read The Books



Susan Mucha's writing is at its best when the action takes off, and that does not take long.

- JAN MERRITT, CHARLESTON MERCURY

DEADLY DECEPTION

Hardback | 288 pages | \$24.95
Harbor House | 2005

A murder at the Augusta National Golf Club during the Masters casts a pall over the prestigious tournament. The victim is mistakenly identified from the number on his Masters badge as Luis Echevarria, a Peruvian doctor now working in Augusta. A note is found with the body that alludes to a soccer tragedy in Lima in which 300 people suffocated. The note baffles police, but not the very much alive Luis Echevarria and magazine writer and Peruvian American Elia Christie. *Deadly Deception* points out the importance of the cocaine trade to the impoverished Peruvian Indians, wakes up the reader to world-wide lucrative archaeological looting, and demonstrates how to use the lifesaving pacemaker to snuff out a life. The majority of the action in this thriller takes place in Perú, and the culture, history and politics of the area are woven throughout the story.

DIE BEFORE YOUR TIME

Hardback | 300 pages | \$24.95
Mason Dixon House | 2010

Elia Christie and Luis Echevarria are again caught up in intrigue. Their wedding in Bermuda turns deadly when a wedding guest, Dr. Vicente Pereda, is murdered. Pereda had noticed dangerous side effects of a drug prescribed to treat spasticity, which was being given to soldiers with neurological impairments returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan. At the time of his death, Pereda was lobbying to have the drug removed from the market. Luis' research shows that the same drug had been on the market during the Vietnam War, and the same problems had surfaced. Is this a conspiracy against American soldiers, or sloppy production methods, or lazy executives? Elia's brother, Father Rafael Christie, arrives to help his sister and Luis finish the detective business so they all can get on with their lives.

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Time, or was that the result of the success of *Deadly Deception*?

MUCHA: It wasn't intentional until I got into my story. I liked that I had a lot of time to develop my characters from the beginning of *Deadly Deception* to the end of *Die Before Your Time*.

VERGE: You are now at work on a third novel. Is it connected to the other two?

MUCHA: I have a new protagonist, but Elia, Luis, and Raf have "roles" in the story.

VERGE: You also teach composition at ASU. Have you seen changes in enrollment as a result of the decline of print and the shift to electronic media and 140-character methods of communication?

MUCHA: Enrollment at ASU has actually increased. But, with regard to the second part of your question, it is true that some people don't read. It's not just students. People actually brag that they don't read books. Who would admit that?

VERGE: What are your feelings and observations about the future of print, physical books and language as a fine art?

MUCHA: More people are buying e-books instead of print. That's OK. But I prefer holding a book in my hand. I don't care how people read my books; I just want them to read them. In fact, as an English teacher, I just want them to read anything!

by ALISON RICHTER