

Kindle Author Interview: Connie Chastain

Interviewed by David Wischart

Connie Chastain, author of Southern Man, discusses her book, her writing process, and publishing on Kindle.

DAVID WISEHART: What can you tell us about your romance novel, *Southern Man*?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: It's the story of a happily married family man whose nascent alcohol abuse convinces gossips at his workplace that his marriage is in trouble. This encourages an amoral, material girl who is romantically obsessed with him. When she attempts to seduce him and he emphatically rejects her, she retaliates by filing a false sexual harassment complaint, with harrowing consequences for him and his family.

DAVID WISEHART: What research did you do for your story into the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: I researched online some of the 1980s court cases that reshaped sexual harassment policy. One such case established that a "hostile work environment" qualified as sexual harassment, not just making the granting of sexual favors a condition of employment. I also researched the process of handling sexual harassment complaints used by several companies and educational institutions.

DAVID WISEHART: What is your view of 1980s-style feminism, and how do you think feminism has changed since then?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: In the 1980s, feminism was changing, from the second wave of the 1960s and '70s, to the third wave we are currently in. It could also be termed in transition from equity feminism to gender feminism, terms coined by Christina Hoff Sommers in her book, *Who Stole Feminism?* Equity feminism, according to Sommers, is rooted in classical liberalism and seeks equal treatment for women. By contrast, Sommers sees gender feminism as gynocentric and misandric.

DAVID WISEHART: Who do you imagine is your ideal reader?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: Traditionalist women, and perhaps some men, who are generally conservative or libertarian in their politics; people who hold a Christian worldview but who aren't necessarily habitual churchgoers or deeply religious.

DAVID WISEHART: What makes a good romance novel?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: It has to be emotionally engaging. To me, a storyline that includes ordinary folks finding and being uplifted by love is very romantic. I've heard romance defined as

friendship plus sex (or sexual attraction), and it seems that a lot of what passes for romance these days is short on the friendship part which diminishes emotional engagement. Regardless of how titillating it is, if it doesn't move me, it isn't romance.

DAVID WISEHART: What was your journey as a writer?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: I started thinking in dialog as a teenager, inspired by Archie Goodwin, the first person narrator in Nero Wolfe novels, a detective series written over several decades by the inimitable Rex Stout. I attempted to write a romance in the 1980s but it turned out to be a huge, unwieldy psychological love story no publisher would touch. What turned the garbage I wrote into potentially readable fiction was the discipline of simplified writing, specifically that found in Rudolph Flesh's *How to Write Speak and Think More Effectively*. I put fiction-writing on the back burner during the 1990s to involve myself in politics but the Internet rekindled my interest in it in 2005. I completed and published *Southern Man* in 2009.

DAVID WISEHART: What is your writing process?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: To procrastinate as long as possible. I belong to the P. J. O'Rourke school of writing:

"Writing is agony. I hate it.When I'm writing, I spend a lot of time thinking, 'My, doesn't the top of the fridge look dirty'. It takes for ever. I like thinking about writing. I like having written. But actually sitting down and doing it ..."

—P.J. O'Rourke, *journalist, writer and political satirist, to Christopher Bray of the U.K.'s Telegraph, 2005*

Once I have something on the screen, though, I can rewrite and edit, which isn't nearly as excruciating as writing from scratch.

DAVID WISEHART: What authors most inspire you?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: The previously mentioned Rex Stout; Frances Parkinson Keyes, specifically in her sprawling Louisiana novels, which are dated now and politically incorrect, but marvelous for her memorable settings and characters. Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*; Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone With the Wind*.

DAVID WISEHART: What project are you working on now?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: I recently sold a romantic suspense novel, *Storm Surge*, to Desert Breeze Publishing for release as an ebook in April 2011, and I'm working on the steps to publication for that. I'm writing a romance novella, working title *Wrong Turn*, that I will submit to e-publishers. I'm also working the next two novels in the Georgia Series, *Sweet Southern Boys* and *Little Sister*, which are sequels to *Southern Man*. There are one, possibly two, other novels in the planning stages that will complete that series.

DAVID WISEHART: What can you tell us about your publishing company, Brasstown Books?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: It's just a name and a website right now, an alternative to saying "self-published" which is literally the case, since I do everything—writing, editing, cover and interior design, typesetting, marketing, etc. The book is printed by CreateSpace, which has turned out a great product for me. I also formatted the text for the Kindle and other e-reader formats.

The name, BTW, is from Brasstown Bald, the tallest mountain in my home state of Georgia.

DAVID WISEHART: How did you create your cover?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: The photos were purchased at 300 dpi from microstock photo websites. I used Windows 98-vintage software, Adobe's Photo Deluxe (home version of PhotoShop) and Ultimate Paint, to process them—remove and replace backgrounds, darken, lighten, increase or decrease contrast, etc. I created the background color with the smear tool and overlaid it with a texture effect called circuit weaver, found in Ultimate Paint. The lettering was also done with Ultimate Paint.

DAVID WISEHART: How have you marketed and promoted your work?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: I have a website with a lot of information about *Southern Man*, and I occasionally feature it on my blog. I created four book trailer videos (two of them are essentially the same) which approach the story in different ways. Other than online, I haven't done much marketing, as the funding I planned to use for that had to be used for something else.

DAVID WISEHART: Why publish on Kindle?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: E-books are the future. Print books will never be totally replaced, but the digital age has revolutionized publishing as it has revolutionized nearly everything. I'm an internet junkie and I love digital technology. Plus, now that e-reader prices are coming down, it makes the book affordable to people who can't, or aren't going to, pay almost \$15 for a paperback book.

DAVID WISEHART: What advice would you give to a first-time author thinking of publishing on Kindle?

CONNIE CHASTAIN: First, write a good book. Next, learn all you need to about Kindle publishing and then take the plunge. Like I said, e-publishing *is* publishing now, and when you do it yourself, you are in total control.

DAVID WISEHART: Thanks, and best of luck with your books.

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Connie Chastain is a former staff writer for *The Florida Sun*, (now the Pensacola Independent News), which was published, starting in 1999, in Pensacola, Florida by former Congressman Joe Scarborough (now the star of "Morning Joe" on MSNBC).

"Read Cover to Cover, Never Bound by the Truth" said the little slogan in the top left corner of

the cover. Connie's articles were all nonfiction and ran the gamut from travel to current events and chemtrails to Bigfoot in Dixie.

She's a ninth-generation Southerner. Born in Georgia, she grew up a preacher's kid in Alabama, attended Alabama Christian College (now Faulkner University) and married a Louisiana boy.

Connie currently resides with her husband of 30+ years in L.A. (Lower Alabama—aka, the Florida panhandle).

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David Wisheart is a writer, director, and producer living in Southern California. He is the producer of *Valentino: a play in verse*, which received its world premiere production at the Hollywood Fringe Festival. He is also a novelist and screenwriter. He interviews writers of Kindle e-books on his blog, *Kindle Author Interview*.

Links:

Kindle Author Interview <http://kindle-author.blogspot.com/>

David Wisheart Website <http://www.davidwisheart.com/>

Connie Chastain Website <http://conniechastain.com>