

1. Tell us about yourself, where are you from?

Where am I from...interesting question since I grew up along the upper Michigan and Wisconsin borderline. We moved a lot jumping from one side to the other. I was born in Park Falls, Wisconsin, lived on this side until I was in Third grade then we moved to Ironwood Michigan, then Bessemer, then back to Rhinelander, Wisconsin – I like to say I have grass roots and every time the geese fly – North or South (Spring or Fall) I get wanderlust and ready to move again or at least travel somewhere. Lived in Bayfield, Colorado a couple years – loved it out there but missed my Wisconsin/Michigan. I've always lived in small towns and currently I'm back in Wisconsin about 30 miles from the Upper Michigan borderline ☺ I am a wife, mother, step-mother, grandmother and great grandmother –sister, aunt, friend and writer – not necessarily in that order. I am retired but work 'part'-time. Anyone who started a part time job knows that usually means you work more hours than full time with fewer benefits and less pay...but I enjoy meeting and interacting with people. Fodder for my grist mill/writing as it happens.

2. What are 3 things people don't know about you?

- A. I am an introvert, I am shy, and tend to be reclusive if I'm not forced to go out. Sounds like just about every author you'll ever meet. I guess because I spent a good deal of my childhood alone (no I wasn't an only child, but was sick with rheumatic fever and other horrid childhood illnesses, Scarlet Fever, etc...I invented people and stories in my hours in bed) – even being part of three sisters and a brother, I was alone a lot.
- B. I love helping people if I can. If I can do it behind the scenes even better, to that end, I donate ¼ of my royalties to various organizations and charities that are connected to each of my books in a certain way. My writing books for instance, I donate those percentages to the local libraries, my young adult book, I donate to the 4-H, two mystery/suspense deal with domestic and drug abuse I donate to the local shelter for domestic abuse victims. Every book has a place that receives that one quarter – it sometimes isn't a lot, but if I ever get famous---those royalties will mean a great deal.
- C. I taught myself to play the piano, to knit and crochet, to quilt and just about anything else I decide I want to learn to do. It finally dawned on me, if I want to do something bad enough I just need to aim, set my goals and wrap myself around the idea until I achieve it. I learned I could write a book when I was working through Julia Cameron Artist's Way books –If I could write 3 pages a day in a journal, that's equivalent to two or three books a year – so why not do that. And I did☺ many times.

3. What got you interested in Writing? I always loved to read and I guess it follows naturally that I'd love to write long letters to friends, book reports, anything that let me have my say without having to say it aloud. When a new friend showed me a manuscript she was ready to send to a publisher and asked for my opinion – I read it and thought – wow if she could, if that was good enough, then I could and I did, eventually.

4. Have you taken any writing courses, which ones; where? Since I nearly failed English and Grammar in High School I thought I better do something to learn that skill when I was working at a community college. I took every single English, Grammar, literature course I could take along with some really great classes in Philosophy, physics, and history working toward my Associates

Degree. I was on the staff of the college paper with columns and feature articles. I loved the challenge. I learned that I could write – and I’ve been doing it ever since.

5. What writer’s groups or organizations do you belong to?

I am a member of Sisters in Crime, National Association of Memoir Writers(NAMW), Romance Writers of America (RWA) Wisconsin Regional Writers Association (WRWA)Upper Peninsula of Michigan Writers Association (UPWA), National Association of Women Writers(NAWW), Society of Children Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). I have my own writers group called Wordmage Writers and Readers, and I also publish Working Writers Newsletter.

6. **Do you write full time?** I do at least for a few hours every morning and more if I’m not working that day. I get up at 5 a.m. and write until I make breakfast for my husband when he gets up at 9 or 10. I put in as many hours as my day allows after that.

7. **Are you a morning writer or do you write better at night?** As I said above – silence in the wee morning hours is my prime writing time.

8. **What is your genre of choice for writing and reading and why?** Actually, I let the story determine the genre. I have mysteries, suspense, romantic suspense, adventure, historical adventure, thriller, and just about everything in between. I bill myself as a mystery suspense author because I enjoy the challenge of a good mystery, but sometimes my muse takes a different turn after I’ve decided on the characters and the story goal.

9. **What do you think makes a good story?** Good, no great characters – no matter what the plot if the characters aren’t believable and full of life, someone you’d love or love to hate—you have no story - a plot is essential, but characters pull that plot into a good story I think.

10. **Who or what inspires you to write?** If I read anything by Natalie Goldberg, or Tess Gerritsen I almost have to sit down and write, right away. Otherwise, it can be as simple as a word that I get from my dictionary (www.mydictionary.com)a daily word, or a quote from one of the many quotes I get in my inbox daily. Or, I might see a person – like this lady I saw once walking toward the Kmart store, she seemed to be hiding in plain sight behind her blonde wig and big hat. Her face was clown make-up at best with garish red lipstick and too much eye makeup. Then there was a woman in line in front of me in a long black leather coat, high boots and a coachman style hat – she was meticulously dressed, coiffure of perfect hair-very pretty – but it was 90 degrees in the shade on a summer day...why? You see the stories almost pop out at you. {smile} It could be someone’s strange behavior – a girl cutting across a field of weedy grass between an apartment building on one side of the tracks and a shopping strip on the other. She wore tall Indian style moccasins; her long chestnut colored straight hair reflected the sun as she went. She looked like an abused, lost waif to my writer’s mind – she became a character in my *Death by Candlelight* series. Everything inspires me at one time or another. A sunflower grew and was blooming in the crotch of my maple tree – aha story. My mother said her grandfather used to start every tale he told with the phrase, “When tag was a pub and turkeys chewed tobacco...” That became fodder for *Watch for the Raven* (my young adult book)

11. **What is your creative process like; what happens when you first sit down to write?** I read from books like Florence Scovel Shinn’s *The Game of Life*, or Mike Dooley’s *Notes from the Universe* or maybe something out of Neville Goddard’s *The Neville Reader*—inspirational titles. Then I

write in my gratitude journal and write out a few goals. By then I'm ready to tackle my current WIP and write at least one chapter in that before I move on to something else as time will allow.

12. **What discipline do you impose on yourself regarding schedules, goals, etc?** My major focus, my major goal is to write something every day usually that includes but is not limited to, one chapter in my current WIP and any other writing I have going, like my column for my Whodunit column for Mystery Fiction's Voice in the Dark and do one marketing thing a day.
13. **What is your particular challenge when writing?** I need to focus on the punctuation and sentence structure – my editor pulls out her hair over my misplaced modifiers and comma profusion. My husband suggested that I should put two envelopes in the back of all my books – one for the punctuation that I have too much of and one for that which needs to be added. I tend to agree with him. LOL I get so wrapped up in telling my story I forget grammar.
14. **What was one of the most surprising things you learned while writing your books?** Wow, that's a loaded question. On top of my mind is how much fun the writing part is, how daunting the rewrites and editing might be—but how wonderful it is to hear from a fan that my characters were delightful or so evil they wanted to smack them or worse. Perhaps, its that after you've writing the best you can write and send off that baby to an editor or publisher the work has just begun – without marketing your book sits on the shelf and your publisher is loath to accept your next manuscript. Sales, sales, sales – and I'm not a very good sales person.
15. **What kind of research is involved in your writing?** That, again, really depends on the story. My latest Diamonds, Death and Deceit – a South African Suspense I researched a ton – I love the research, but I'm glad every book doesn't take that kind of research. I've researched poisons for my mystery books, weapons for suspense, techniques for my writing books – it depends though...like the organic gardening book I'm working on now...I've gardened in just about every kind of soil imaginable for years – organically—I love it and I've done all the research those years when I tried to grow my own and put food by (can, freeze etc).
16. **How long does it take you to write a book?** It really depends. I've written a novel during the NaWriMo (National Write a Novel in a Month) challenge for 3 years – it's invigorating and fun—of course those usually take more writing and rewriting after the challenge – I would say on the average 3 months if I concentrate and the writing is flowing...longer if I hit a snag – sometimes my husband (an avid reader 2-4 books a week sometimes-none of mine however LOL) he provides the twist I need or the ending I'm lost at, or if I've painted myself in a corner, he comes to the rescue.
17. **Does your family take an interest in your writing; do they read and critique your work?** As strange as it may seem most of the time none of my family buy or read my books either while I'm writing them or when they are published – my husband's sister and an ex-mother-in-law buy and read everyone. I wish they all would. {smile}
18. **How many books have you written, how many of them are published; which one is your favorite?** I currently have 34 published books and probably have at least that many more in various stages of completion – someday maybe I'll return to them. My favorite, and this is funny, it always seems to be the one I'm currently working on. There is a soft spot in my heart for my first book, *Death by Candlelight*, I guess as with the first born child – there can only be one first born. Even though the rest are just as thrilling and loved.

19. **What is your current work in progress?** I am working on a suspense now the working title is *July Heat* –it is the seventh book in my Zodiac Sleuths Series. The protagonist is Judy July – I’ve worked through the Zodiac each sleuth’s name reflects the month of her sign, each is an accidental sleuth and this particular one Judy has lost part of her memory – someone is chasing her but she doesn’t know why – Cairo Egypt keeps turning up in her life and it scares her but she can’t put her finger on why. She is a writing teacher – in a community college’s outreach program. She has decided to take her class on a short class trip to have them try to discover her past, they think the character they are researching is for a novel the group is writing together...they are kidnapped – the whole class...some are later released...the others – well, there goes the story. When I finish doing a book for each Zodiac sign I am going to bring them all together to solve one final crime – one of them will be in deep jeopardy and the others will try to dig her out.
20. **How do you handle writer’s block; rejection?** Writer’s block – I usually have too many writing projects going to get that. If one story isn’t working I’ll work on another until I find a place to begin again and I do, sometimes very quickly. Or I will start a handicraft project, knit or crochet the repetitive motion seems to let my muse work and eventually something works out. Rejection used to bother me – but by the time I got enough rejection letters to wall paper a large bathroom – I realized it is just one person’s opinion and they may have been having a bad day – or whatever. I’ll look over the manuscript and if I still think it’s good I’ll just turn it around and send it out again. With computers that’s a fresh manuscript printed and addressed cover letter newly written to suit the new publisher and off again. Meantime I get busy on the next one. One of those marvelous author/agent/publishers said (I forget who – either Rob Parnell or maybe Evan Marshall) a rejection, you just sent it to the wrong address. The particular editor you wanted wasn’t at that address – send it out again until you find the right address he or she is waiting for you.
21. **Have you ever self-published your work/ who was your publisher ?** I did self-publish several things: A book of essays, a book of flash fiction, two poetry books and several cookbooks that tied into several of my novels with LuLu. They now has great distribution but I previously pulled those books and haven’t republished them at this time. I did one novel with one Publishing outfit that a friend (I thought she was a friend)and part of the staff there recommended - and had the worst experience of my life I don’t think they are in business anymore...(Page Free Publishers)
22. **What has been your experience with publishers?** For the most part, the ones I’m published with I have had good experiences. Most of my books are with Wings ePress, Inc. I love them— they do a thorough editing job, they have great cover artists and are very, very helpful and cordial to new writers. The small press generally is more ready to work with their writers – and they aren’t afraid to take a chance on new or even a combined genre that hasn’t been done before.
23. **Do you have an agent; who and how did you find him/her?**
No, I have tried several times to get an agent and finally gave up. It’s almost harder than getting a publisher I believe and it’s getting more so. You can’t submit to the big publishers like Random House or Simon and Schuster without one, but –with a small publisher your books is available

for as long as you want to keep your contract with them. With the big publishers – your book has a bookstore shelf life of two or three weeks if it doesn't sell its way out the door. So which is better? Unless you hit the big time – like JK Rowling, Stephen King or one of the other big names - *sigh*.

24. **Have you received any awards for your work?** I've won poetry contests, I received the Golden Wings award for my book *Ancient Secrets* and I received a Best Seller designation for *Money Isn't Everything* (another of the Zodiac Series books). I have two books entered in the EPPIES and have my fingers crossed for good news on them.
25. **Do you have other interests and hobbies you pursue when not writing?** I garden (organically) I knit, crochet, quilt, and do other handicrafts while my muse is idling in the background somewhere.
26. **What are you reading at the present time?** I'm always reading several things – I try to read a chapter a day in several books – like new authors Pat McCain, SK Hamilton, J Gayle Kelly they are delightful writers on their way up. I also keep a current Tess Gerritsen handy she is some kind of writer. So now I'm reading *For The Love of Willow Walk*, by SK Hamilton and *Ice Cold* by Tess Gerritsen. But I also have those motivational books mentioned earlier going that I read before I write.
27. **How have you promoted your book; do you think self-promotion is important?** Absolutely self-promotion is an unconditional must no matter who publishes your books. First of all, no one else has as much invested in your book as you do – and you know the most about it so it should be you.

I usually do all the normal stuff; the social networks, the bookmarks, book signings (which are really tough around here – we are so small and rural) I mail postcards and stick bookmarks or some form of promo material in every single piece of mail that leaves my house whether it's a bill being paid or a donation to some charity, or just a letter – it gets a bookmark and or business card. That is the main reason I pay all my bills by check instead of electronically ☺.

I've held a book signing with the local animal shelter – and donated ½ of my royalties to them for that day – *Fin Fur and Fatal*, the second book in the Zodiac series (and they and the animal hospital get ¼ of my royalties on a rotating basis now)—that was the best book signing I've ever held.

I hold contests and have serialized a novel in progress, which I and two other authors are doing again with our news letter [Working Writers Newsletter](#)...I have sign up boxes on all the pages of my website. I've done blog tours and radio interviews and podcasts, I've spoken to groups as diverse as a The Red Hat Society and presented at workshops such as Obadiah Christian Women Writers Conference. I host my own writers group in my home and that gets biweekly coverage in our local paper. If you look at everything you do as potential advertising, some type of promotion or advertising for your book...you will find various ways of promoting.

I donate copies of all my books to our local libraries – and I have books on consignment at the small Party and Grocery store where I work as well as the animal hospital...it works all the time when I'm not around for people who see my work out there.

28. **Do you hear from your readers; what kinds of things do they say?** I do more and more. I had one woman come into the store and just squeal with delight at meeting a real author face to face – she had purchased and read several of my books. She wondered if I'd mind a hug – that was beautiful.
- I've had people ask how I ever came up with this and such character or the name of the character – or rave until I get embarrassed in a store full of customers. I usually do get embarrassed when someone tells me they love my book or books. I still can't get used to people actually liking what I write. Modesty, introverted – ya they all fit me. But nothing compares to hearing, "I stayed up until 1 or 2 this morning reading your book, I couldn't put it down" That is the best.
29. **What are your views on eBooks and audio books?** Are you published or plan to publish in either media? Ebooks Yes! With all the new e-book readers and kindle and the rest – more opportunities for more people to buy and enjoy your book wherever they might be. I still love to hold a "real" book in my hands and so do a lot of the people who buy my books, but the younger generation – they want it portable, and innovative, and now! All my books are available in electronic versions except the one I have with - *sigh* Publish America...The rest all are available in whatever format a reader wants. I haven't gone audio yet but I'd like to – I think those books for the blind or those who want to listen in the vehicles on their daily commute – excellent idea. I'd do it in a minute if I could.
30. **Do you have any advice that you've picked up along the way to share with other writers?**
- I think I've heard for as long as I have been trying to write the advice – read, read, read everything and anything – and write, write, write – that is such good advice I don't think I can top it unless it's with NEVER NEVER NEVER GIVE UP.
31. **What is it you want the reader to know about you that wasn't covered in the interview?**
- That I welcome questions, comments and ideas for new books they'd like to see. I'd like them to join my newsletter, visit my websites www.billiewilliams.com and <http://writingwide.com> and blogs <http://printedwords.blogspot.com> and <http://onewomansgarden.blogspot.com>
- You'll find a sign up box for the Working Writers Newsletter on my website – free three authors WIP (works in progress). There are contests there as well. Anyone who comments on this interview will be eligible for a signed cover flat of my newest book released October 1st *Diamonds, Death and Deceit* .

Thank you for the wonderful questions and the chance to be on your guest list.

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