



Chrysteen Braun's "Cabin" novels, a blend of historical fiction, romance, and mystery, inspired by the picturesque Lake Arrowhead.

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The Diverse Experiences Shaping Chrysteen Braun's Writing

By Dan Peters

Chrysteen Braun, an award-winning author and native Californian, has led a life as diverse and rich as the stories she pens. Born and raised in Long Beach, Chrysteen's journey into the world of writing began at the tender age of twelve with her first novel. Although the details of that early work have faded, the dream of becoming a writer never left her.

At eighteen, Chrysteen found herself amidst the vibrant chaos of Hollywood, working for Capitol Records. Her task? Ordering album covers for the Beatles' iconic "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." Despite her initial skepticism about the song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," this experience was just one of many that would later color her writing.

When career decisions loomed, Chrysteen joined her family's construction business, eventually becoming a licensed flooring and general contractor. For nearly fifty years, she and her husband Larry dedicated themselves to remodeling and interior design, a legacy now carried on by their daughter. Yet, the call to write never truly faded.

In the early 1980s, Chrysteen rekindled her passion for writing by joining an Orange County writers' group alongside then-unknown author Elizabeth George. Although life and business took precedence,

Chrysteen Braun discusses her journey from construction to writing, the inspirations behind her novels, and how life experiences shape her storytelling.

she continued to write articles on remodeling and interior design for local newspapers. Retirement offered Chrysteen the perfect opportunity to reinvent herself and dive back into the world of fiction.

A member of the Southern California Writers Association and OC Romance Writers, Chrysteen draws inspiration from her second home in Lake Arrowhead, California. Here, she opened a home decor store aptly named "At The Cabin," and the serene mountain setting became the backdrop for her "Cabin" novels.

Chrysteen currently resides in Coto de Caza, California, with her husband Larry, whom she affectionately calls "the wind beneath my wings." Her journey from a young girl with a dream to an accomplished author is a testament to the enduring power of passion and perseverance. In this interview, Chrysteen Braun shares insights into her early writing experiences, the influence of her varied career, and the inspirations behind her beloved novels.

You wrote your first novel at the age of twelve. How did your early writing experiences influence your later decision to pursue writing as a serious endeavour?

You wrote your first novel at the age of twelve. How did your early writing experiences influence your later decision to pursue writing as a serious endeavor? I wish I still had that novel, although I'm sure it would have been a terrible one. My mother loved it, though. Growing up in an office environment, I learned how to type, and actually typed it. I think down deep, I always imagined I'd one day become a famous writer. I'm still waiting!

Your career journey includes diverse experiences, from working at Capital

Records to running a family construction business. How have these varied roles shaped your writing and the themes you explore in your novels?

As with most authors, everything we do in life creates experiences; sometimes they're interesting enough to include in your writing. I've always loved old homes, and in my cabin series, my main character, Annie, is an interior designer. And that's how she meets several of the people who had ties to the cabins. She loves restoring cabins and I've enjoyed sharing some of the things she's done. I didn't use my experience at Capital Records until I started working on Family Portrait which will be out next year.

In the 1980s, you joined a writer's group with Elizabeth George. How did this experience influence your writing style and your decision to eventually return to writing after retiring from your business?

She and I were almost at the same stages of our writing when I met her, although she had a lot more discipline than I did, and went on to write wonderful stories for those many years before I got back into the swing of it.

The mountainous setting of Lake Arrowhead plays a significant role in your Cabin novels. What inspired you to choose this location, and how does it contribute to the atmosphere and themes of your stories?

We loved the mountains and all the fresh crisp air. I couldn't help but think what a wonderful location to set my books in. When we finally retired, we combined our mountain home with our Long Beach home, and we kept a lot of our decor; as a designer, I was able to merge the mountain look with classic traditional decor, and my husband and I love it.

The Man in Cabin Number Five features parallel stories of two women, Annie and Alyce. What was your inspiration for these characters, and how did you develop their intersecting narratives?

We had a second home in the mountains of Lake Arrowhead, California, and I still had a desire to write. I spent almost a year trying to figure out what I was going to write, and what my characters would do to sustain a series. Annie's story is loosely based on me when I got a divorce many years ago, and I actually used part of my husband's childhood experiences for Alyce.

Your Guest Book Trilogy blends historical fiction, romance, and mystery. What challenges do you face in combining these genres, and what do you enjoy most about writing stories that span different time periods and styles?

I'll never be an author who sticks with one genre. I knew I didn't necessarily want a happily ever after ending, and I wanted to add some mystery and intrigue about people who "stayed in the cabins". I'm not "true" historical fiction author, basing my story on events from a specific time/era, but I do include a lot of history and facts about the mountains in my writing.