

Lake Arrowhead's Inspiration

Chrysteen Braun's diverse career and life experiences inspire her novels, blending historical fiction, romance, and mystery, set against the backdrop of Lake Arrowhead's serene mountains.

The Setting Behind the "Cabin" Novels

Award-winning author Chrysteen Braun, a 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, 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.

Reflecting on her early writing experiences, Chrysteen recalls, "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!"

Chrysteen's career journey includes diverse experiences, from working at Capitol Records to running a family construction business. These varied roles have significantly shaped her writing and the themes she explores in her 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 Capitol Records until I started working on Family Portrait which will be out next year."

Joining a writer's group with Elizabeth George in the 1980s had a profound impact on Chrysteen's writing style and her decision to return to writing after retiring from her 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 Chrysteen's *Cabin* novels. "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. Chrysteen explains, "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."

Chrysteen's *Guest Book Trilogy* blends historical fiction, romance, and mystery. She shares, "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 a '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."

Chrysteen Braun's journey is a testament to the enduring power of passion and perseverance. Her diverse experiences and rich life story continue to inspire her writing, captivating readers with every novel she pens.



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