



Welcome to the Writing Our World Press E-Press Kit!

Writing Our World Press (WOW Books!) is an independent publishing company founded in Chicago, IL, by former newspaper publisher and presidential diarist Janis F. Kearney. The small publishing house, established in 2004, offers non-fiction, fiction, children's books and women's histories.

Inside, you will find our very exciting 2008 literary news, including:

- In June 2008, WOW! Books relocated to the founder's native home, Arkansas;
- WOW! Books launches two fall releases—including its debut novel:
 - Kearney's second memoir, *Something to Write Home About: Memories From a Presidential Diarist*, offers readers a bird's eye view of the Clinton White House from the eyes of a sharecropper's daughter.
 - *Once Upon a Time There Was a Girl: A Murder at Mobile Bay*, written under the pseudonym J. F. Kearney, is the author's debut novel. The story is a zoom lens look at how the good people of a small Alabama town weather the storm of a murder tainted by race.

Both books are scheduled for a November release.



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About Writing Our World Press

Writing Our World Press (WOW! Books) is an independently owned, Arkansas-based publishing company specializing in biography, non-fiction, fiction, and children's and women's literature.

Writing Our World Press was founded in 2004, by former newspaper publisher, presidential diarist, journalist, and literary advocate, Janis F. Kearney, in Chicago, Illinois. In 2008, the company relocated to Arkansas.

Writing Our World Press publishes one to three titles per year.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.writingourworldpress.com>.

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About Janis F. Kearney

Janis F. Kearney is one of 19 children born to Arkansas Delta Sharecroppers. In 1988 she became publisher of the award-winning Arkansas State Press Newspaper, founded by Arkansas civil rights legends, Daisy and L.C. Bates. In 1993, she joined the Clinton Administration, and served five years as personal diarist to President Clinton. In 2004, she founded Writing Our World Press, a small Chicago-based publishing house that relocated to Arkansas, in 2008.

Kearney is the author of critically acclaimed *Cotton Field of Dreams: A Memoir*, published in 2005, and cited on **Jet**, **Essence**, **Ebony** and **Crisis** Magazines' Best Seller and "Books of Note"



Janis F. Kearney

lists. *Conversations: William Jefferson Clinton, From Hope to Harlem*, a presidential biography was published in 2006. That year, she also co-authored—through Writing Our World Press—*Quiet Guys Do Great Things To: A Black Accountant's Success Story*, with Frank K. Ross, one of the first black partners in a Big-Four accounting firm. She has been invited to speak both nationally and globally about her journey from the Arkansas delta to the White House, and about her role as personal diarist to President Clinton.

Kearney's secondary role for the last eight years has been in academia. In 2003, she completed a two-year fellowship at Harvard University's W.E.B. DuBois Institute of African and African American Research. In 2004, she served as Chancellor's Lecturer at Chicago City Colleges; and from 2005-2007, she served as a Humanities Fellow and part-time faculty at DePaul University. In 2007, she taught writing and presidential history as Humanities scholar at Arkansas State University, at Jonesboro.

The author's November 2008 releases include *Something to Write Home About: Memories From a Presidential Diarist*, a second installment of her personal memoir; and *Once Upon a Time There Was a Girl: A Murder at Mobile Bay*—her debut mystery novel based loosely on a 1985 racial murder case, in southeast Arkansas.

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For Immediate Release

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Former Presidential Diarist Pens Memories of White House Years

Cotton Field of Dreams Author Shares Highlights of “Almost Camelot” Experience

Little Rock, AR—Janis F. Kearney, former publisher of the Arkansas State Press Newspaper, board member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), and personal diarist to President William Jefferson Clinton has written her second memoir, *Something to Write Home About: Memories From a Presidential Diarist*; four years after her first memoir, *Cotton Field of Dreams* was published. In this new title, Kearney speaks openly and nostalgically about her years with the Clinton Administration—including her five years as personal diarist to President Clinton that she refers to as “almost Camelot.” She also shares moments of her mentor-friendship with Arkansas legend Daisy Gatson Bates.

Writing our World Press (WOW! Books) was founded in 2004, with its debut title, and Kearney’s first book, *Cotton Field of Dreams*. The author introduced a special edition of the book at the William J. Clinton Library Inaugural Celebration held November 2004.

Cotton Field of Dreams was listed on **Jet**, **Essence**, **Ebony** and **Crisis** Magazines’ Best Seller and Books of Note lists; and, on the NAACP People’s Choice Awards’ short list for 2006 nonfiction books. The coming of age memoir chronicles Kearney’s amazing journey from the southeast Arkansas Delta where, she writes, “Civil Rights was a dream, cotton was king and education was the carrot that stayed just out of reach for so many blacks.” The memoir paints a vivid picture of the Arkansas delta and its inhabitants—particularly, James and Ethel Kearney and their 19 children.

Eighteen of the Kearney children beat the odds of growing up dirt poor, in the southeast Arkansas delta; entering and graduating from such colleges as—Harvard law



school, Stanford law school, Yale law school, Brown University, University of Arkansas, Vanderbilt, and other fine schools around the country. Two Kearney siblings served in the Clinton Administration, and four served under Governor Clinton's administration.

Kearney's memoir garnered outstanding marks by people like noted author and memoirist Marita Golden, who wrote: "Janis Kearney writes straight from the heart. This is a lovely celebration of her family's strengths, journeys, tests and triumphs. *Cotton Field of Dreams* is a book to treasure, a book that will restore as well as reward."

International attorney, author and friend to Presidents, Vernon Jordan says, "Janis F. Kearney achieves a rare feat in writing both poignantly and despairingly of that period in American history most Southern writers either sugar-coat or paint with wide, dark brushes of horror."

E. Lynn Harris, an Arkansas native and prolific novelist, writes: "Janis F. Kearney's *Cotton Field of Dreams* is exquisite writing. Hers is a story that touches the soul in its beauty and ugly truths about America's South."

Roland Barksdale-Hall, Managing Editor of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, says, "...well-written, *Cotton Field of Dreams* is a welcome addition to libraries, seamlessly weaving lyrical prose and poignant human drama to entice the reluctant and satisfy the mature to read."

Kearney was mentored by founding publisher of the **Arkansas State Press** Newspaper, and Arkansas' civil rights legend Daisy Gatson Bates, of the 1957 Central High Crisis.

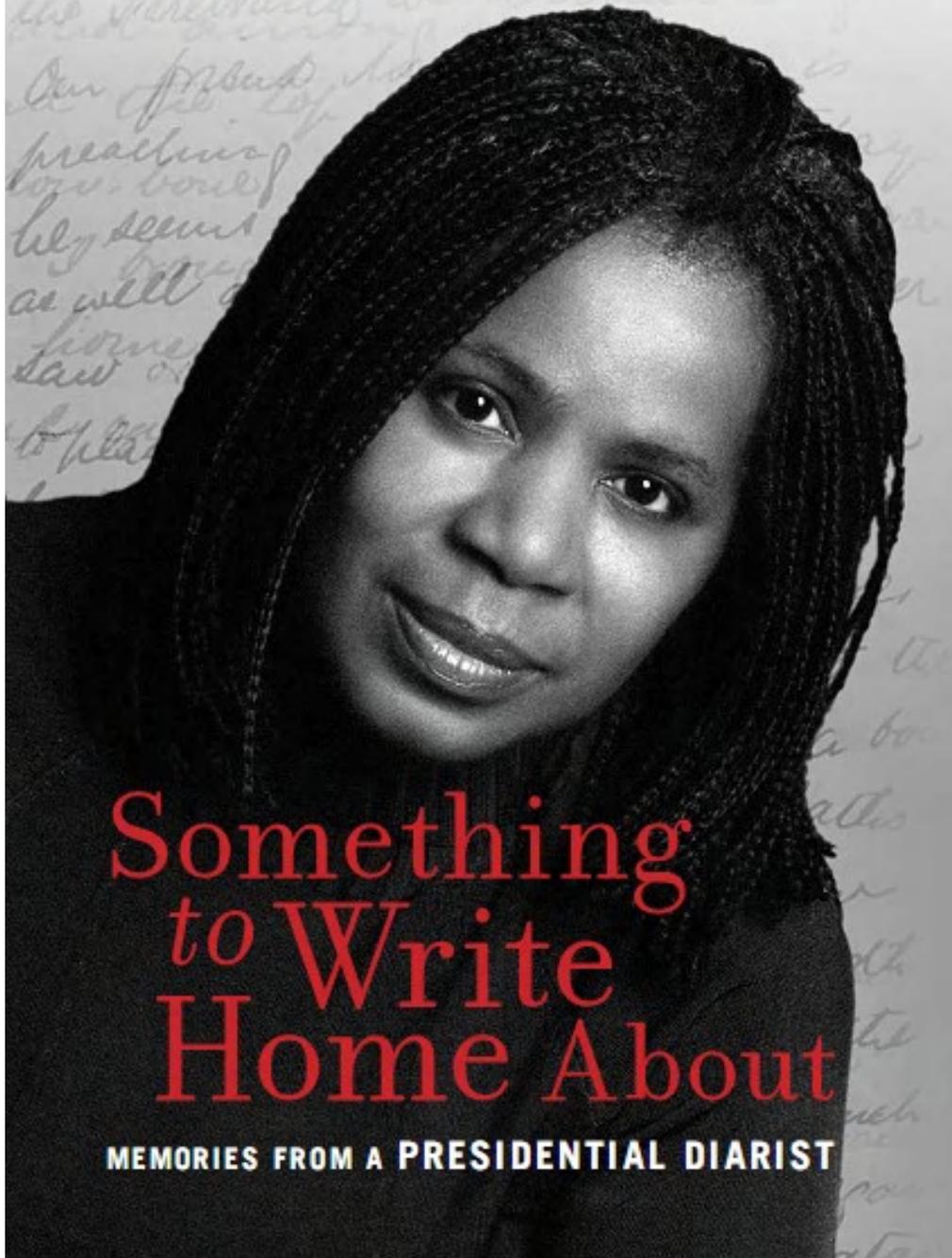
Something to Write Home About : Memories from a Presidential Diarist, is scheduled for release November 2008, and will be available at book outlets around the country, Amazon.com, and www.writingourworldpress.com e-bookstore. For more information regarding the book, go to www.writingourworldpress.com For information regarding the author's book tour, or to inquire about scheduling an event, email Janis@writingourworldpress.com

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JANIS F. KEARNEY

Author of *Cotton Field of Dreams: A Memoir*



**Something
to Write
Home About**

MEMORIES FROM A PRESIDENTIAL DIARIST



Something to Write Home About: Memories From a Presidential Diarist

By Janis F. Kearney

Excerpt from Part III: An Unfinished Life

I wouldn't stop the car, risk changing my mind. The decision had been too difficult, too painful. I turned away from the rearview mirror, imagining Daddy growing older. I wished for more resolve; to erase the small beads of doubt. This journey was necessary, predestined. Wasn't that what Daddy had taught us, about dreams, about impossibilities, about preparing ourselves for miracles? Yet. I was giving up so much...would miss so much about our Sundays on Varner Road; The Sunday School visits, where Daddy was still superintendent – after more than 50 years; and the warm and friendly hugs from those who remembered “Faye,” growing up there. “My goodness, if you aren't the spittin' image of Miss Ethel!”

I'd miss the cool, spicy fragrance of Aqua Velva that Daddy had fallen in love with in 1965. His nine-year old son, Jerome, had bought it at Fish's Grocery Store, wrapped it with care, and delivered it proudly, on Christmas morning. Since then; the smoothly rounded blue bottle had never disappeared from my father's bathroom cabinet.

I'd miss the sweet, buttery aroma of Daddy's yeast rolls that sometimes met me at the door – informing me that Daddy's morning had been one full of reminiscences of his life with Mama. Those days ended either in living room naps, or passionate discussions about politics – no more one-sided lectures once I was old enough for my own opinions.

It was the 90-minute drive to Route 1, Varner Road; though, that I would miss most. Going home to the place of my past, and where the Kearney family still gathered. Daddy's blessings had been a prerequisite for my journey. Yet, my heart broke to see that his eyes held more than blessings, something sadder than pride. For the first time, I regretted the 90 minute drive that would allow me to remember all that I would miss...all that I would lose, in this journey to Washington, D.C. and the White House.



A Questions and Answers Session with Janis F. Kearney, author,
Something to Write Home About: Memories From a Presidential Diarist

Q: Your first Memoir, *Cotton Field of Dreams* was centered around your coming of age in the pre-civil rights south. And, though your childhood mirrored the lives of other black families during that time; few black youths today –whether they reside in the south, or other parts of the country—can identify with such an existence of dire poverty. Your new memoir, *Something to Write Home About*, also strains believability for most black Americans, as you write about your role serving as a diarist to the president of the United States. What is the correlating thread between these two stories, and these two levels of existence?

A: You are so right. *Cotton Field of Dreams*, and this second memoir do represent two extreme opposites of existence—at one extreme, my environment was poverty and need; and the other, I am surrounded by power. Yet, in fact, they both prove one truism—the American dream is alive and well. I am saddened to know so many young people no longer believe there is such a thing available to them. I’m always hopeful, though, that many of them will realize that no one person or group of people have claim to the American dream. It’s up for grabs, to any of us willing to go for it. It doesn’t matter if you’re dreaming about making it to the end of the week with a few dollars in your pocket, or one day working for the president of the United States. My life stories prove this is as true today, as it was one hundred years ago.

Q: On January 20, 2001, you and hundreds of others left the White House, as a new president and his aides took over. You had served in the administration for the entire eight years –five of those years in the White House as personal diarist to a president. What was it like to step outside that kind of experience, back into the “real,” world?

A: It was such an amazing eight years for us. And then came the end of it. First, none of us expected to be turning over the White House to the new president, and I think that was the first shocker. But, then came the actual walking out of that bubble. What an unexpected experience, those six or eight months after the White House. I think most of us were hoping we could just close the door to our offices or cubicles; turn in our blue badges, say goodbye to those civil servants who would stay behind, and not ever really have to think about the experience again, unless we chose to.

The opposite is what actually happens. Working in a White House, or for a president... for most of the people I worked with; changes your life for that time in big and small ways. It is almost true that you breathe a different air. That position is the reason you get up each morning; what keeps your adrenaline pumping. And, even



while we all thought we were prepared –had actually started preparing months earlier; January 20th is still a surprise. It was as if our lives came to an abrupt halt. On January 21, we were suddenly at a very strange, awkward, almost painful juncture in our lives, knowing we had to move forward – but not really having the inertia to do so. We hadn't realized how much of our *everything* we'd devoted to that place and time. It absolutely takes most people six months, to get the experience out of their systems; to move forward, to get on with your life, realigning yourself with people and places that were a part of your life before the White House experience.

Q: What was the greatest challenge for you, as a woman and a minority who worked in the White House, and for the Clinton Administration? What advice would you give young women who are drawn to politics or government?

A: I wish I could tell you something concrete such as blatant racism or sexism...those things we all know still exist, but I can honestly say I wasn't aware of it on a day to day basis. My challenges were more personal, like being able to maintain who I was in the midst of what I found myself in the middle of. I don't mean the negative things that came and went, but side effects of that aphrodisiac-like allure of power and prestige; things that can taint your integrity, your sense of who you really are...if we're not careful. As I said earlier, it is actually a little like breathing a different air. Even when you may not believe there is anything special about who you are, others are convinced there must be; and begin to treat you that way. So, simply keeping my head, and making sure my feet stayed on solid ground...that was my challenge. Remembering from whence I came, and how many people had sacrificed so that I could sit where I sat each day. My challenge was to constantly remind me that I wasn't there because I was so special, or smart or indispensable.

What would I advise young women seeking roles in politics or government? I'd say Hurrah! Go for it, and never let anyone tell you that you can't or shouldn't pursue your goal. What America needs is more good politicians and a more diverse array of good politicians. Women have to be committed, they have to be willing to learn, and willing to work very, very hard. With those values in place, there is no reason they can't do or be whatever it is they desire to be.

Q. Why did you take seven years to write this second installment of your memoir?

A. Actually, I began working on this book immediately after I left the White House. It just turned out that I had two other books already in the hopper that needed to be told first. As publisher of a small press, in addition to being the primary author; I find myself making decisions constantly as to which stories have to be told, and when. It's as if I'm



placing them on a mental assembly line and plucking them off only when that little voice tells me their time has come. I must say, there are lots of reasons I believe this story is important now – in the midst of so much dismal news, and hopelessness. I pray that my story touches young people, that those interested in politics find some redemption here, come away knowing that there is so much good “mere” politicians can do if only they will.

Q. You compare your time in the White House to *Alice In Wonderland*. In the story Alice follows a “mysterious white rabbit” into a mysterious world “populated by peculiar creatures.” Was there a mystic in President Clinton that was different from that of Governor Clinton? Also, was there something that stood out in your mind (good or bad) that was especially “peculiar” about the Clinton administration?

A. I compare it to *Alice in Wonderland* in two different contexts, but the white rabbit is really my challenge to my sense of discovery, exploration –of getting outside my 30+ year comfort zone.

Leaving Arkansas, and moving to a place like D.C. was a major, major cultural leap. Here I was in my late 30s’, finding myself in a whole new world— having to learn a the complex “take no enemies” political culture, that would now be my life 24-7. So, that was the Alice I was, at one level.

And, then, at another level; the change was more of an intrinsic upheaval. The “me” I’d always been, was being forced to change to some extent, simply for survival; while I was fighting hard to hold onto the lessons and the values I’d always held onto. I knew I would have to get up each day and do the things I was brought to D.C. to do, and accept that nothing would be as it had been in the past—the experiences, the level of friendships and family I was accustomed to, none of that was here. As Alice likely was, I was afraid and early on, often sad. But, at the same time, there was an undeniable excitement about this change. I was challenged, and I bet there isn’t much difference in me and Alice, in how we love challenges.

Q: How would you describe that magical bridge that took you from Varner Road to 1600 Pennsylvania? Is that a bridge that other blacks and women have access to...no matter where they begin their journey?

A: Yes, yes that same bridge I crossed can be crossed from any point in the universe, by anyone willing to cross it. It doesn’t matter *where* you begin, but it does matter who you begin your journey with; what takes place during those earliest years in your starting place. It doesn’t matter if you start out in the cotton fields, or the Appalachian mountains, or the Indian reservations, or right on the other side of the Mexican



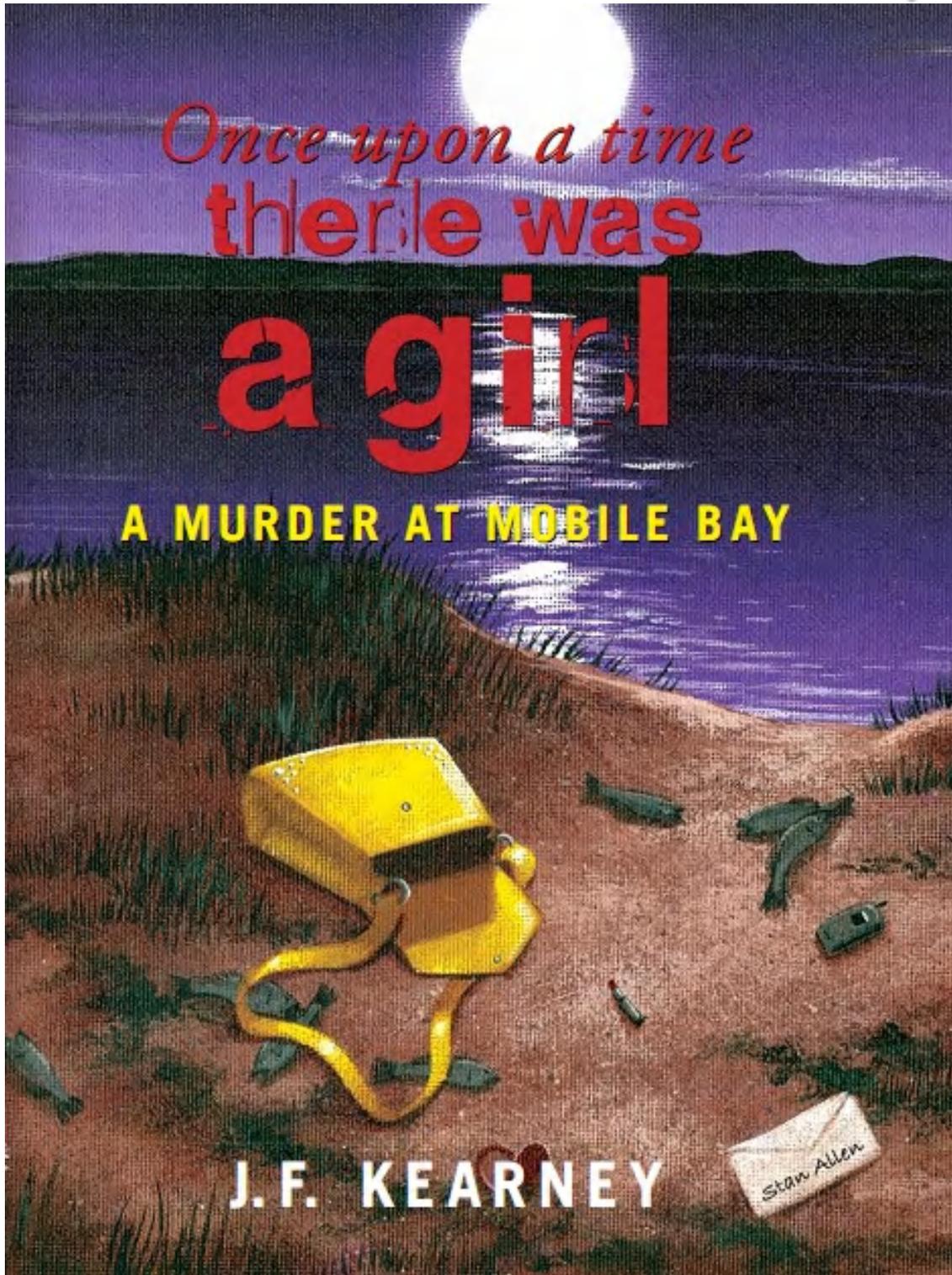
border...the bridge is permanent, sitting there waiting for you. Dreams, hopes, hard work...and, yes, prayer; are the things that will help you cross that bridge. There's really nothing magic about any of that.

Q. In reading *Cotton Field of Dreams*, we know there were so many invaluable lessons from Varner Road that you took along with you throughout your journey. But, what are some lessons you learned, and took with you when you left the White House in 2001?

A. The greatest lesson was an appreciation, and better understanding of politics. Here was something I'd never held much appreciation for, even though I'd grown up listening to my father talk about politics constantly. He loved politics, and had an innate understanding of it; but the part of politics he shared with us was more of the negatives about how it was used against so many people. I understood that, and I formulated my disdain for politics based on that. So, as a young adult, I had no real respect for politicians. I laid most of this country's ills at the feet of the people I considered either weak or dishonest politicians. The opportunity to see firsthand that there actually is a thing I now describe as good politics, was a wonderful evolution; especially to be able to share with my Dad, what *good* politics was doing for everyday people like us. That was a great and important lesson for me.

The second most important lesson was not a new one; but working inside the White House bubble gave me a good opportunity to relearn it: Every man puts on his pants one leg at a time. Simply put, we're born, we live, we die. No one, no matter how smart, how beautiful, how rich, how powerful does it any other way. So, how in the world does one person get to call himself greater than someone else...based on what? I often say the greatest lesson I learned in going to an integrated school was the powerful lesson that white skin didn't make others smarter or harder working, or nicer. Working at the White House taught me that power doesn't make a person great. We're all human beings, blessed or cursed with different opportunities, and even how we choose to use those opportunities doesn't raise us up beyond being simply human.

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Once Upon a Time There Was a Girl: A Murder at Mobile Bay

By Janis F. Kearney

Excerpt from Part I: Goodbye to An Angel

Tom walked back to his desk and sat down. He reared back in his leather swivel chair and stared up at the ceiling. He was trying, unsuccessfully, to prepare himself for the most difficult of jobs in his duty as police chief. He wondered if anyone ever got used to this type of thing—telling a mother or father his or her child is indeed dead.

Tom knew time was of the essence. Why in the hell was he sitting here? Though he'd sworn the search team to secrecy, there were never any guarantees when human beings were involved. They almost always meant to do the right thing, but too often it just didn't turn out that way. They could never explain how it happened.

Tom simply had lost his nerve somewhere between the place where Angel lay and this office, which suddenly felt like a comforting mother's arms. Or maybe it always did. He'd go to the Jackson's as soon as his stomach stopped doing flip-flops and the palpitations in his heart calmed down.

Any second now, he would raise himself up, walk out that door, slide into the seat of his squad car and drive the few blocks to Elm Street to the last house on the block. Clarice and Winston Jackson lived in one of the older, but well-kept subdivisions. It was a mixed neighborhood with mostly lower and middle-class inhabitants. The Jackson home was a nice brick and wood rambler. There would usually be a blue Camaro and a 1952 Chevy pickup truck sitting in the driveway. Tom had driven past the house many days, waved at Clarice or Winston or been struck by Angel's wide, innocent smile. He didn't know the Jackson's' other two girls well enough to call them by name if he ran into them on the street.

There would be other cars parked there now...and other people, too—friends and kinfolk standing on the porch and in the yard. They most likely had held vigils for the past few days with the Jackson family. By now, they were all exhausted and sick



with fear of what the outcome of the search would be. Tom could visualize the tired, sad eyes following every car or truck that passed that way as they awaited an answer to where their Angel might be. He knew most people in Daphne considered the girl like family, or at least that her safety had a larger meaning for this community. The outcome of their search would either remove the growing shadow of suspicion and fear over the city, or darken it even more.

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A Questions and Answers Session with J.F. Kearney, author,
Once Upon a Time There Was a Girl: A Murder at Mobile Bay

Q. What initially inspired you to write this story?

A. I think most writers can relate to this fact: no story remains “as is” throughout the process of writing it. This story started out something quite different –closer to a real murder case that I knew quite well. One in which I knew the family of the victim. I wanted to write that story because in meeting them, and some of the people of that town I saw how that one murder had in many ways torn the town apart –left questions and doubts in its wake.

But, writing is such a powerful medium. The process made me realize that I should leave that story where it lay, that I was in fact honoring that family in another way by telling a completely fictional tale about a murder in a special town.

Q. Why did you write a novel where the lead character is white? Do you consider Tom Mallory white? Does his character?

A. Police Chief Tom Mallory is an extremely interesting, complex character – and those kinds of characters come in all colors. He is considered white, although he has a black great grandmother, and a rich Louisiana Cajun ancestry. So, we see he is a hybrid of cultures. But, his whiteness is important to this story more so, because the victim is black, and the town has a history of trying to bypass the pain of racial conflicts. This is a very pivotal time for the town, and for Tom. I simply needed that contrast to play up some emotions and conflicts.

Q. Do you believe the townspeople of Daphne did Angel Jackson a disservice by their collective infatuation with her, living among them as an object of their enchantment?

A. This is an interesting question because I hadn’t thought of it that way, at all. I do know she struggled to “grow up,” in her mother’s eyes – and there is some sense that her mother, in particular, wants to hold onto her daughter’s innocence- keep her the “little black Angel” she’d been as a child. And, yes, the town people are also enchanted with the young woman, who most see as a cross between a woman and a child. They are drawn to her innocence, and goodness; and, in a way I think they believed that her goodness would protect her. Maybe this is the reason they find such personal pain in her death, and why they grapple so with such an unlikely murder as hers.



Q. Other than Chief Mallory, who are the heroes in this story? There is a cast of five characters whose lives are intertwined; but who stands out as the person who will play the most important role in pulling the community past this tragedy?

A. I would have to say that while Angel's mother, Clarice, is the most vulnerable, and having been hit hardest by this tragedy, she is also a strong character. She can be a catalyst for change in the community at many levels. We see her finally accept some hard truths about what she could have done differently as a mother. That gives me hope that she can now take that next step of forgiving and moving past the tragedy, to help mend the community. I think she will work closely with Mayor Simmonds, Reverend Manley and Chief Mallory to make Daphne as good or better than it was before this tragedy.

Q: Stan Allen, the young man who turns out to be Angel's love interest plays an almost behind the scenes role in your story. Yet, it is Stan who lingers in Angel's mind even as she travels to her death on that night on Mobile Bay? What does he bring to this story?

A: Stan Allen, though he is most certainly a virile man who has stolen the heart of our young Angel, is also a metaphor for Angel's metamorphosis. Amazingly, this 21-year old woman chooses as her first romantic liaison, a very handsome, married man who happens to be having undisclosed problems at home. A statement is being made, and whether she would have eventually confronted her parents with this stark change or not, we're not sure. But, we know that she is using this relationship to help break free of Clarice's loving bondage.

Q. Finally, what can we expect in your next installation of the Cajun Lawman Books? Will Chief Mallory still be around? What about any of the other characters?

A. Chief Tom Mallory is the only recurring character for the Cajun Lawman Books. His role will continue to evolve, and readers will learn a little more about him, and about his past in each of the books. The site of his work might very well change, or even the time period of his life; but he will always be the focal point of the Cajun Lawman Books.

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