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Bits of Calvert appear in book

Local author pens mystery novel with northern Calvert setting

By MEGHAN RUSSELL Staff writer

If in reading Lynn Franklin's new mystery Calvert Countians find parts of the setting familiar, that's probably because the action and drama are located very much in their own backyard.

"The Blue Diamond," the first in a series of Jeweler's Granddaughter mysteries, follows protagonist Kim West around the "Three Beaches" of Calvert — North Beach, Chesapeake Beach and a third, fictional beach just south of those, which she named Osprey Beach after the county's famous Chesapeake Bay bird.

In the story, Kim is privy to a burglary at her grandfather's jewelry store, after which he asks her to guard a rare blue diamond. While simultaneously celebrating the bond between a grandfather and his granddaughter and exploring the world of jewelry and gems, a mystery unravels and includes everything from murder to romance.

"I really wanted to capture the flavor of what we've got here," Franklin said about her decision to set the story in Calvert. "This county is unique, the history is phenomenal, the people are so neat. I just really enjoy living here."



Staff photo by DARWIN WEIGEL Lynn Franklin of Sunderland recently published "The Blue Diamond: Jeweler's Granddaughter Mystery" set in the Beaches. The Kindle book is the first of a series she plans to write with Calvert County locations as backdrops.

Many stories that take place in waterfront communities portray the locals as unsophisticated, the Sunderland resident said. But in Calvert, “we don’t have that here. Everybody is friendly, they take pride in their work.”

Franklin and her Pulitzer Prize-winning husband Jon moved to the county in the early 2000s. Prior to that, she lived in a variety of places across the U.S. but still chose to use northern Calvert as the backdrop for her new series. Future books in the series will highlight other areas of the county as well as other gemstones, she said.

In “The Blue Diamond,” local readers will recognize Dunkirk District Park, a handful of restaurants, the North Beach boardwalk, the Chesapeake Beach water park, the Beaches’ July 4 fireworks display, local fishing boats and even the Chesapeake Beach geese Franklin said are famous for blocking traffic. She also used her poodle, Sam, and a friend’s Daschunds as the inspiration for two comic relief canine characters.

Franklin said the reason she created a fictional third beach town was so that she didn’t have to stir up any trouble by setting a murder in any actual local businesses.

The book has been published for about a month now, available for Kindle or Kindle app only, and so far she has sold more than 100 copies and received 10 five-star reviews on Amazon.com, most of which are from strangers. One fan even wrote to her and asked where Osprey Beach was located because he found her description of the area so beautiful, she laughed.

“I’m getting this a lot — people saying they don’t normally read mysteries but they like this a lot,” Franklin said.

Nickie Jenkins of Chesapeake Beach is one of those readers. Jenkins said mystery isn’t her preferred genre, but this book caught her attention and kept it.

“It’s obvious that it’s set in a fictitious town that’s based on our towns here and the landmarks here, the people you see,” she said. “You hear about stories written in New York City or D.C. but never a little town like this, so that was really cool. I hope it really takes off and becomes successful.”

While the characters are all fictional, Franklin said she is tinkering with basing a character in a future book off a local boat captain. And in “The Blue Diamond,” Kim’s grandfather is largely based on her own grandfather, Max Bahler, who moved to the U.S. from Switzerland when he was 17.

“He was a Swiss watchmaker and jeweler,” she said, and he loved to dote on her. Her relationship with him became the inspiration for the book. “A lot of books highlight the grandmother/granddaughter relationship, but not the grandfather relationship.”

She also viewed other grandfather/grandchild relationships and pulled bits from those as well, to make the characters more “universal,” she said.

Joan Rose of Owings, a friend of Franklin’s, lauded the work Franklin put into the book.

“She’s actually gone to some gemstone mines and talked to people in the industry,” Rose said, adding that she enjoyed the book so much “I can’t wait for the next one. It just comes alive, and it’s very heart-warming.”

Rose’s dogs served as models for one of the story’s pets, and she said Franklin nailed their personalities.

“They’re kind of a high-spirited breed, very driven by their stomachs,” she chuckled. “I think any Daschund owner is going to be able to relate to this.”

Franklin has been writing full-time for years but even before that she worked jobs in the journalism and public relations field where she could write for a living, occasionally waking up at 4 a.m. and writing her own material before going to work. She still runs an online writers discussion group, WriterL, which she started in 1994.

Already, she is hard at work on the second mystery in her series, which will feature rubies as the central gemstone.

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To learn more

Learn more about Lynn Franklin and the Jeweler’s Granddaughter series at lynnfranklin.com.

The first book in the series, “The Blue Diamond,” is available through Amazon.com for Kindle and Kindle app.