

Local author release first in mystery series

CANDI HIGLEY - Spanish Fork Press
Thursday, October 20, 2005

Spanish Fork Press

After reading an intriguing story in the Deseret News and wanting to write a mystery that would appeal to everyone but would avoid bad language and situations, one local author had the inspiration and a great idea for his latest book. Jeff Savage, author of "Cutting Edge," and "Into the Fire," has lived in Spanish Fork for the past four years with his wife and four children. Savage read a column in the Deseret News by Ann Cannon, in which she told a story about her grandmother's home. In the column, she mentioned that her grandma left abruptly and never returned and never told anyone about it. She died before the reason was ever told to anyone. Savage was intrigued by the story in the column and thought it would make a great mystery series. After talking to many individuals who told him that they loved fast-paced mysteries but hated all of the language and sex scenes, Savage approached his publisher and told them he wanted to write a clean murder mystery that didn't have any LDS themes in the novel. Covenant Communications was more than pleased to offer a fast-paced mystery series that was clean and could appeal to everyone.

"House of Secrets," the first novel in Savage's Shandra Covington mystery series is hitting bookstore shelves throughout the state this week. The novel revolves around the main character, Shandra Covington and the story of her grandmother's home. Shandra Covington simply assumed her grandmother's house was sold after her grandmother hastily moved in with Shandra and her mother two decades ago. Yet, Shandra finds out it is deeded to her in her grandmother's will. Shandra is a single, aggressive and accomplished journalist and has tender memories of the time she spent at the home as a young girl.

This curiosity and sentimentality lead her to a final visit to the forgotten home. What she discovers shocks her to the very core. Not only does she find the house filled with her grandmother's old belongings, but there is also a body, long since dead, and covered with the same thick layer of dust as the rest of the items in the house. Shandra returns to the house with the sheriff and his handsome deputy, Clay, and they find that the body is missing. In its place is another body--this one dead less than 12 hours and now all the evidence points to Shandra.

Desperate to clear her name and uncover the truth behind these troubling mysteries, Shandra puts her journalist training to use. Between the reluctant townspeople, ominous warning and physical threats, Shandra learns the truth, little by little--knowing full well that someone is determined to keep old secrets buried, even if it means burying Shandra as well.

Savage is excited to share a fast-paced murder mystery with his readers and has learned a lot from the opportunity of writing from a female first person perspective.

"The majority of my audiences are 80% female," he said. "And I found by writing this that I couldn't generalize women. Each has their own way of doing something. But because my main character is female, I have found that women are more thoughtful and introspective and I have learned to write that way. Shandra is definitely a more interesting character because of the deeper level of her emotions and actions."

Savage is planning to release two Shandra Covington books a year, which will add to the series. He also has a supernatural thriller, "Dark Memories," that is represented by Bookends, LLC and is being looked at by several national publishers.

Savage offers some great advice for aspiring authors which has helped him during his career as a writer.

"First, I tell people to decide why they are writing," he said. "Are they writing to just be published? Or is it to share creativity or tell someone something? Once they have decided on their purpose they can succeed. Second, I tell people to finish what they are writing. I always have people say to me, I have this story, but I stopped writing after the third chapter. I tell them to keep writing. Finish the story and then you can always go back and revise and edit. It is a lot harder to just stop and then try to restart."

Anyone interested in Savage's book, "House of Secrets," can find out more information at his website, www.jeffreysavage.com or can find the novel at Seagull Book, Deseret Book or any store that carried LDS fiction. This story appeared in Spanish Fork Press on page A5.