

## **An Interview with Susan Mallery**

By Lynne Marshall

First published in the LARA Confidential October/November 2008 edition© with permission to reprint.



**Do you ever wonder what makes an author consistently successful? Or how they got their start? Or how do they keep those great story ideas coming? I recently had the opportunity to ask Susan Mallery a few questions, and she graciously consented to answer. But first, here is a brief bio for one of the most prolific romance authors working today. By the way, she's got a fun website ([www.susanmallery.com](http://www.susanmallery.com)), which includes games! Check it out.**

**Susan Mallery is the bestselling author of over one hundred romances and she has yet to run out of ideas! She has written series romances, as well as single titles, historicals, contemporaries and even a lone time-travel. Always reader favorites, her books have appeared on the Waldens bestseller list, along with the USA Today bestseller list.**

**She has won awards for everything from best single title contemporary, to best Special Edition of the year and recently took home the prestigious National Readers' Choice Award. As her degree in Accounting wasn't very helpful in the writing department, Susan earned a Masters in Writing Popular Fiction.**

**Susan makes her home in Washington state where, rumor has it, all that rain helps with creativity. Susan is married and has two aging but neurotic cats and a dog. The dog is a relatively recent addition to the family, and the cats are seriously unamused. (There is a cute picture of her dog on her website.)**

**1. How long were you writing before you got published and how many manuscripts had you completed?**

I wrote about 20 months before I published. I had the advantage of having a lot of time to write and take classes. Living in Los Angeles, I was able to attend screenwriting seminars, UCLA Extension writer's program and other local events.

Despite the relative speed of selling, I had exactly 50 rejections by the time I sold. Editors, agents and magazines. I'd sold a few short stories to Woman's World, although there were many rejections for each of those. I sort of compressed 5 or 6 years of being unpublished into a really short period of time.

## **2. Where do you get your ideas?**

I have a very thick idea file and I'm constantly adding to it. Sometimes it's just a thought triggered from an overheard snatch of conversation, sometimes an article in the news and other times, an image in a magazine will trigger something and I have to rush to jot it down and put it in my file. I'm not sure I'll ever be able to write all the stories waiting for me.

## **3. Do you plot and make character studies before you start, or do you fly by the seat of your pants?**

I'm a huge plotter. I don't understand how people can just sit down and write. I need to know I've solved all the problems before I start. Plus, my plots are fairly complicated. I need to keep track, so I do a very detailed outline before I begin.

Having said that, my story nearly always begins with character. I get an idea for someone or a situation. And yes, I do character charts, as well. I've created my own, based on dozens of workshops. Over the years I've figured out what I need to make a book work and I make sure I have that info before I start.

## **4. What about writing makes you anxious?**

Making sure the next book is better than the current one. I constantly study craft and try to stretch myself. I hate when I disappoint my readers, so I work hard to make sure that doesn't happen.

## **5. How long does it take you to complete a manuscript and how many books do you write in a year?**

It depends on the book--how long, how complicated, etc. I can write a book in anywhere from 2-4 months. Series books write faster, of course. Some single titles have to be built, character by character, plot point by plot point. Others seem to appear nearly fully formed. The latter goes faster.

## **6. Of all the books you've written, which is your favorite, and are there any you wish you'd never written?**

My favorite is always the book I'm going to write next. It's still in my head, so it's still perfect. Once I start writing, I realize what I write will never match the vision in my head. Sometimes I get close, but it's never exactly there. I think that's good--so I'm always striving for better.

I don't regret any of the books I've written. If I were to read an old book, I'm sure I'd find 50 ways to make it better, though!

**7. Are you involved a critique group, plotting group, any kind of writer's group?**

A few of my good friends and I meet twice a year in Las Vegas for 4 days for a plotting session. We've been doing it for years and it's great fun. Each of us plots two books in 4 days. We take turns with 1 – 2 hour sessions and by the time we're ready to go back home, we've got two books we're ready to write from start to finish with minimum fuss. Of course we have fun in other ways too, after all, it's Vegas!

**8. How do you see the romance genre evolving in the next ten years?**

I think there will be a return to "traditional" romance, with contemporary single title doing well and historicals making a comeback. However, I don't think the historicals will be like those of old. I also think paranormal is here to stay, but it's going to become woven into other subgenres.

I think category romance is at a crossroads. They're either going to have to reinvent themselves or they're going to decline.

But hey, I could be wrong about all of it!

**9. Which writers do you admire?**

I never name names. I did once and accidentally left out a good friend. She's \*still\* teasing me about it. All writers are fabulous, especially the ones I know!!

**Thanks, Susan, for taking time out from your busy writing schedule to share some of your publishing insight with us. Is anyone else as interested as I am in getting a look into Susan's idea file? I'm looking forward to her next book for HQN in January 2008, *Accidentally Yours*.**