

Reposted with permission of Janet Goetze

## Vivid imagination lets retiree spin juicy tales

**The former newspaper writer turns to fiction with a story of the first woman president**

Thursday, August 09, 2007

JANET GOETZE

**Special to The Oregonian**

They were at 35,000 feet over Kansas when Carol Thomas started telling Jerry Kirkpatrick about one of those crazy dreams she has.

"I turn them into B movies in my head," said Thomas, who is the executive director of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in her waking hours.

More than three years ago, when the two were making a business trip to Washington, D.C., Kirkpatrick was assistant director of the nonprofit laboratory, which provides teachers and school districts with research, publications and teaching techniques. About six months later, he retired. Now, the 69-year-old West Linn resident credits the talk over Kansas with starting him on a new career as a novelist.

Thomas said Kirkpatrick, a former newspaper reporter with a law degree, could write just about anything, from technical papers to grant proposals. "You need to start writing books," she remembered telling him more than once.

On the plane, she related her dream about the first woman president, who had a twin sister. "He pulled out the back of the ticket envelope and was taking notes," Thomas said, but she forgot about the conversation after the plane landed.

Kirkpatrick kept the envelope, however. Later, at his home computer, he modified Thomas' dream by substituting a half-sister for the twin and adding an assassin, a long-term affair and exotic locales that he has visited, from Bali to Seaside, Ore.

He completed "The President's Pardon," about President Margaret Warren, in about a year. In a second year, he finished "Re-Election," the sequel. His publisher is Inkwater Press of Portland.

Shortly before he started writing, Kirkpatrick said, several publications had run articles about prominent women who might become presidential candidates. The articles and the conversation with Thomas gave him ideas for his President Warren, Kirkpatrick said.

However, he didn't create a role model. Instead, Warren schemes her way up the political ladder with deceit, assassins and bad DNA. Asked where he got these ideas, Kirkpatrick, a gregarious but mild-mannered man, laughed and replied, "I have a vivid imagination."

He has set aside a third novel since he and a former colleague signed a contract for a nonfiction book about the development of the nation's regional educational laboratories, started in the 1970s with federal money.

Meanwhile, Thomas has finished reading "The President's Pardon," but she'll have to wait for "Re-Election." Her husband grabbed the book first, she said.

"I've had friends who have retired and feel they have at least one book in them," Thomas said. "But Jerry obviously has more than one."

Janet Goetze: [jgoetze@earthlink.net](mailto:jgoetze@earthlink.net)