

Andi Marquette revealed at Queer Girl Talk by DK Ward



Andi was born in Albuquerque and grew up in Colorado. She completed bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology with an emphasis in archaeology and spent some summers digging through the past on excavation and survey teams. She headed back to Albuquerque in 1992 to pursue a doctorate in history, deciding that the more recent past might prove exciting, as well. While a grad student at the University of New Mexico, she fell into editing and has remained obsessed with words ever since. From 1994 through 2004, she worked as an editor in academic publishing and managed to complete that Ph.D. in 2000. Her areas of expertise are American political, social, and gender history with particular emphases on the American West and white supremacist movements. Ever restless, wanderlust bit and in 2004 she followed a wild hair East and currently resides in Nashville, Tennessee with her partner and two dogs, where she keeps herself busy as a freelance writer and editor and plotting routes back West.

Who is Andi Marquette?

Andi: I'm laughing at this because I've spent the past 25 years trying to figure that out! Holy crap, if you have an inkling, please share. I'll buy you a pizza. I did come up with a new acronym for myself recently: LOTFOE. Lesbian On The Fringe Of Everything. I'm one of those "bridge" people (GAWD that makes me sound like a troll in a Grimm's tale)--that is, I run in all kinds of circles (usually the outer edges) and occasionally the boundaries between my varied posses bounce against each other, with me as that link between them. Hence, bridge person.

Beyond the LOTFOE thing, though, I'm a westerner (as in American West) by birth and soul, and tied more to the strangely spiritual topography and cultures of that region of the country than to any sense of my genealogy's historical underpinnings. I thus was born in the right place, I think, for who I'm turning out to be (which might change...check back next week). I come from a proud collection of black sheep, with my parents the semi-outcasts of their respective families. So we are a rather eccentric bunch, my nuclear family and I. My parents are wanderers, metaphorically and physically, and I'm beginning to suspect this might be some kind of genetic thing, since my sister and I both love to travel, learn, and meet new people. In the spirit of black sheep that have gone before, my sister and I have also carried on the tradition of not believing anything anybody (especially in authority) says until we check it out ourselves. Which means, yes, I ended up in academia pursuing degrees and thus learning how to check things out thoroughly. I have an academic background (YIKES!) in fields that seek to understand humans and the cultures and contexts in which they run. I have no clue sometimes what makes people tick, but the varied and marvelous expressions of "human-ness" keeps me endlessly fascinated and always humbled. We are a weird bunch, for sure. But dang, what a ride!

And now for the short answer, since it's getting pretty deep in here: Just another dog-lovin'

lesbian westerner outdoorsy writer and editor type who appreciates sunsets, slickrock, river-running, and a nice local brew at the end of a long day.

Christ, now I sound a like a personal ad...<g>

Hey I'll have one of those! Getting back to the "deep" Andi. Does Evelyn ever emerge in Andi's books?

Andi: Yep. Ev's a much better researcher than Andi. And sometimes she uses big words.

L-J Baker (whose work I adore) asked me what genre "Land of Entrapment" was, besides kind of a mystery/thriller/romance thang. I told her it's "fluff with an edge." I wrote LoE not just to purge myself (as best I could) of the really icky aspects of researching white supremacists, but also to enlighten people about a few things that WS believe and some of the activities in which they might engage (like, planning for the apocalypse, stockpiling, and bowling for honkies [okay, I made that last thing up]). I also wanted to introduce readers to New Mexico, which is the drumbeat of my soul in many ways. So what you'll get when you read one of my NM books (thus far, "Land of Entrapment" and then "State of Denial") is a lot of New Mexico quirkage/history, including lots of Hispano/a culture and issues that have resonance in current life. LoE deals with white supremacists, and State deals with homophobia (internal and external). The third NM book, which is in progress, incorporates quite a bit of Native culture. The 4th, in its planning stages, will deal I think with immigration and the 5th with Spanish land grants, which continue to influence NM. So hopefully, you'll get a good story with characters you can relate to, but you'll also get a sense of NM's landscapes, the people that inhabit them, and the interweavings of different historical groups that have made the state a crossroads of cultures.

And yes, I do have to research these books. My academic training has proven really useful for writing the kind of fiction I do. Some day I'm going to do some historical fiction, but right now, I'm having a hell of a good time doing "fluff with an edge."

That is so awesome and inspiring that you know already what each book will be, and have figured most of the storyline out all the way to the 5th book!

Actually, the characters told me. <G> That freaks people out when I say that...

LoE was a story I started thinking about when I finished up my dissertation. I really wanted to do something fictional about white supremacists because I had a feeling it would help me move past the soul-sucking heinosity (cool word, huh? Made it up!) of researching that topic. But it didn't click until I actually started writing LoE. "State" grew out of a story I had started about ten years ago. I have a great friend who was a colleague of mine in grad school and she and I used to joke around about how we were going to write a lesfic book together and we had this whole plotline totally figured out--it was this crazy romance between a hippie chick and a chi-chi art gallery chick and my colleague and I would die laughing at the storyline as we planned it (no, that has never come to fruition) but during that time that we were goofing off with this idea, I guess it provided some inspiration because I started mulling a murder mystery that had an element of homophobia to it. I had the first page written (10 years ago) but it wasn't "clicking" and when things don't "click" for me when I write, I just stop and put it aside and go with something that IS clicking. Well, fast-forward a few years and I finished LoE and was thinking about the second book, which I had already determined would star Chris Gutierrez, a secondary character from the first book. And at that point, I realized that Chris's book would be the story I'd started years before and sure enough, it "clicked" this time. I guess it was just waiting for the right character to find me.

Anyway, while I was writing LoE, I had already decided that I was going to do a series of books based in New Mexico and all these ideas started coming up about what kinds of things New Mexicans get all riled up about. Because it's a western state, the big issues are usually water,

land, and people. And because of New Mexico's past, the issues express themselves through tensions between "old" and "new" and between different cultural groups. However, there are issues that affect New Mexicans that also affect other people in this country. White supremacist groups, for example. Homophobia. These are the big issues that LoE and "State" deal with. I'm interested in how bigger issues affect small regions, and how the peculiar historical and cultural nuances of a specific place can create different reactions. New Mexico, because it is part and parcel of who I am, seemed the most logical place for me to write about because I spent a lot of time there and I just really love it as a place, whether physical or metaphorical. It's probably the only place I've ever lived that is both real and surreal, with those two things intertwining in really intriguing layers of culture and history. So yeah, it inspires me and I hope that I do it justice through the characters in this series and through my plotlines.

You certainly love the land and it's reflected in the passionate detailing of your descriptions. I wonder is it because you have all of this information inside that it comes out easier than just making stuff up?

I'm sure that's a big part of it. All this crap stuffed in my head...and I've always had this weird...um...obsession's too strong a word. Hold on...okay, how about, I've always felt connected to landscapes. Part of that is my parents' fault (D'OH! Isn't that ALWAYS the case??? Don't blame ME...it was my PARENTS! <g>), who took me and my sister throughout our childhood on jaunts all over the country, exploring. Consequently, I spent a lot of time outside, experiencing various topographies. I learned, from an early age, how to read landscape and what sorts of conditions create certain features. There's no substitute for getting outside and feeling how you and your body react to different landscapes and different weather patterns. And I've always been interested in how people interact with their environments, whether natural or built. Anthropologically speaking, the history of humans as a species can be tracked through how different groups adapted to the type of environment and climate in which they found themselves. That's still true to a certain extent; we've just developed more options through technology to keep ourselves warm and cool, depending on external conditions. And as an archaeologist, the relationship I had with landscapes became more intimate because I was literally IN the landscape in some instances. I was also blessed with a pretty good sense of direction and internal compass and I don't really get lost, whether I'm in a wilderness or urban setting. A lot of that is simply because I pay attention. I like knowing where I am in relation to features on the land, how those things look from various distances and directions, and how long it takes to get there on foot or by driving. I do that in cities, as well.

So, yeah. I like my characters to interact with their surroundings and to be aware of their surroundings and out West--if you've spent any time traveling there or living there--the land is extremely important because there are still vast expanses of unsettled space and it is entirely possible to drive through some areas and not see another vehicle or human-made structure for miles. So you have to know where you are and where you're going or you could run into trouble, especially if the weather's bad.

It's a mixture, thus. I personally love landscape. I love reading books that incorporate settings, whether inside or outside, because I think it really can ground a reader (pun intended) in a place and provide another sense of where the characters are and why they do what they do. That said, I also CREATE landscapes for some of the things I write--especially spec fic. But when I write contemporary fiction and historical fiction, I try to write places I've been so that I can better envision who the characters are. In spec fic, however, all bets are off! Those places I've only visited in my head, so I draw on my experience with climates and earth-bound travels to extrapolate settings in other worlds. But I still do research for that, as well.

Aryan Cowboys: White Supremacists and the Search for a New Frontier. That sounds kind of scary?

Andi: Girl, it was. For those of you who don't know what the heck this is, it's the title of my revised dissertation, which was published by the University of Texas Press last year. Yes, I write fiction under a pen name of sorts. Andi is one of my actual names, though. Anyway...I've been researching the American extremist right since around 1992, more officially since 1994. I started with the Christian fundamentalist right because of the influence of those beliefs in the 1992 Colorado elections, when the infamous Amendment 2 passed, which effectively denied legal recourse for GLB people (T was not explicitly spelled out in the amendment's wording, though I suspect it was implied) who lost housing or jobs for being gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In 1994, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Amendment 2, a huge victory at the time. I had just finished up a paper for presentation at a big queer studies conference in Iowa City. The paper compared the rhetoric that Colorado for Family Values used to get people to support Amendment 2 to the rhetoric the 1920s Klan used to demonize its targets. What I found was that though the targets had changed, the arguments had not.

Delving into the 1920s Klan got me interested in other incarnations of extreme rightist ideologies. I was working as an editor at the New Mexico Historical Review and one of the articles I was editing was about the John Birch Society in southeastern New Mexico/northwestern Texas. The JBS is a hard right organization that was founded in the 1960s. Its big thing was anti-communism. At any rate, working on this piece then got me thinking about extremism and regional identity. I'm trained as a western historian (history of the U.S. West) as well as in American history overall with specific emphases in social, political, and gender history. About the time I was editing that article, I started mulling this idea of the American frontier and how American mythology about the "frontier" is almost always white, almost always male, and generally Protestant. And I asked: "what's up with that?" Because the ideology behind most white supremacist groups is white, Protestant, and male. Could there be links?

Well, I believe there are. "Aryan Cowboys" will take you on a journey through specific groups in the western United States since roughly 1970 through 2000. Using the ideas behind Manifest Destiny--that is, the "god-given right of white settlers to push westward and take whatever land they wanted"--I argue that the very idea of America and its "character" is predicated on the mythology of the "frontier." The trope of the frontier is generally a manly-man, white cowboy/farmer/frontiersman. And that trope finds expression in white supremacist groups and ideologies. But my point in this book is not that white supremacist beliefs are "fringe." In fact, they're very old beliefs, woven into the fabric of this country that find more vocal and media expression during times in which Americans are generally freaking out about things like the economy. Whenever people freak out about either a scarcity of resources or a PERCEIVED scarcity of resources, it seems they start targeting "others." So "Aryan Cowboys" deals with white supremacists, yes, but also with what it means to be "American" and how masculinity gets tied up in that. I found a lot of material in my research in which the groups referred to "hiding out in the West" and "building a white nation in the West" as well as a reverence for American men who farmed and American men who "took matters into their own hands," like frontiersmen or cowboys might have.

I notice that invariably, when I talk about this research, some white men tend to get extremely uncomfortable, as if I'm accusing them of running around and joining white supremacist groups or that I'm assuming that all white men are "bad." I make it very clear in this book that that is simply not the case, though the groups are predominantly male. History and people are far too complex to suggest that just because one is born white and male and who might even identify later as Protestant does not mean that person is going to join a white supremacist group. This book is about strands of American ideology and mythology that have found expression in extremist groups--specifically with regard to "frontier" myths and how that relates to the American West.

How did I do my research? I talked with and corresponded with members of these groups, I accessed literature produced by these groups on file in archives (and available at gun shows), I acquired government documents through the Freedom of Information Act, and I tracked them

over the web. Since 1995, especially, it's relatively easy to do this. And I've read some of the books that they produce. No, I did not infiltrate the groups. I made a conscious decision to be up front and open about my research with the groups and to be up front about my own beliefs, which I call leftist and progressive. I was very open about not agreeing with these groups' beliefs (which probably meant I wasn't going to get many interviews, though some researchers have). Some members of these groups are dangerous and I decided that if I infiltrated, pretending to be something I wasn't, I was running a huge risk if I was ever found out. Not to mention the risk I would take as a "single" woman joining these groups. I could not be open about my lesbianism if I infiltrated, and eventually, there would be questions about why I didn't have a husband or a boyfriend.

Why did I do this research? I guess I initially wanted to see how Colorado for Family Values managed to convince 55 percent of voters in that state to restrict legal recourse for GLBT people. What things did they say? What resonated? So when I found Klan literature from the 1920s--and the Klan was hugely popular during the 1920s--I found similar buzzwords and phrases. I found similar appeals to morality and God, similar appeals to virtue and American pride. And what this research showed me is that with the right words, and the right leader in times of economic and social stress (whether perceived or real), people you would never think can be attracted to groups like this. I wanted to demystify these groups, not only for myself but for others. But it took a toll on me. This was terribly difficult research. I have not read such vile, horrible things ever as I read in the materials these groups disseminate and propagate. It left me feeling dirty and somehow tainted for months. And it put me in a depression for a while. But I'm a terribly stubborn researcher and I have this thing about finishing what I start, so I carried on with it and wrote the dissertation. Still, I wasn't done. I knew that chapter of my life would not be closed until I revised the dissertation and published it. So I did that, too, and sent in my final revisions to the University of Texas Press in the summer of 2005.

At that point, I no longer wanted to research that crap. It's emotionally and spiritually draining, which takes a physical toll on you, as well.

And then...

"Land of Entrapment." My first novel picked up for publication. I wrote this book during the fall of 2006, and it was an amazingly cathartic experience. It does incorporate elements of my research about white supremacists, and the main characters have to deal with a white supremacist group, but for some reason, writing my work into fiction, where I could control the actions of these groups, kind of freed me from the hold my research had on me. It was healing, in some ways, writing "Land of Entrapment" and I think had I not written that book when I did, I might still be in a weird funk about "Aryan Cowboys."

Regardless, it's sort of amusing, in kind of a sick way, that here I am, this totally leftist lesbian and I research masculinity as expressed in the extreme right. I'm not sure whether to laugh or cry sometimes at that!

Is that why you wrote that kind of novel the first time out?

Andi: "Aryan Cowboys" isn't a novel. It's nonfiction. Which makes it all the more painful. A novel is escapist. This was not. It's the revised version of my doctoral dissertation.

I've been researching the far right since about 1992, when Colorado for Family Values (I was a grad student in Denver then) managed to get the anti-gay Amendment 2 passed (fortunately the U.S. Supreme Court overturned it in 1994). I wanted to know how a group that so overtly professed anti-gay sentiment could have convinced a voting populace to support such a mean-spirited amendment. Also in 1994, I presented a paper at a major queer conference in Iowa City in which I compared CFV to the 1920s Klan in Colorado. The links I made there--between the Protestant right and the more extreme white supremacist right--led me further into researching

the extreme right. Also around then, I began wondering how the larger currents of American history--especially the colonial impulse that drove white Anglo Protestants across the country, ever westward--play into modern white supremacist rhetoric, and how gender plays out in white supremacist groups. I wanted to see if there were links, if in fact it's accurate to claim that the far right is "fringe." What I found showed me that no, in fact, the far right isn't as "fringe" as people would like to believe, that in fact the things they say out loud are things that you'll find buried in a lot of rhetoric coming out of socially and politically conservative camps that do not identify as white supremacist. Does this mean that all white Protestant men are white supremacists? Absolutely not. That's crazy to suggest that. But what I argue and what I discovered is that extremism--whether it's right or left--has roots in less extreme beliefs and that those beliefs have been a part of American history since the first Europeans arrived here.

I'd also like people to read the book and think about their own biases, and to think about what those biases can lead to. The research I've done (and history itself) shows us that biases can lead to really awful things. But we can't just dismiss extremism as "so out there we don't need to worry about it." It's NOT so out there. It's your friends. Neighbors. The guy who always says "hi" to you at the corner market. Words have power, after all, and even if you won't ever pick up a weapon and turn on somebody because they're black or gay or different somehow, you might profess biased beliefs out loud and there might be somebody out there who hears what you say about other people and THAT person will pick up that weapon and carry out what your words seemed to suggest. Is that your fault? No. Everyone is responsible for his or her own actions, ultimately. But what good can possibly come of succumbing to bias and then professing it? It is, after all, one thing to say: "I hate spinach" and quite another to say "I hate gays/blacks/Jews/immigrants/[insert group here]."

"Aryan Cowboys" is a history about white supremacist beliefs in this country as reflected in modern groups who were/are based in the U.S. West. And I take a look at that mythological Western trope: the cowboy and how the mythology that surrounds that trope influences these groups. "Aryan Cowboys," I hope, makes us look at the scary parts of ourselves that maybe we don't want to look at and maybe we don't want to admit. Everybody has biases, after all. Writing the dissertation and then writing the book forced me to look not only at other people's biases, but any that I myself might harbor and not realize. It was a journey through the really awful parts of the human condition that I took because I wanted to understand how people could have such terrible hatreds toward each other and what drives them to live that kind of hatred, to perpetuate it, and to attempt to inflict it on others. Do I understand now? I don't think so. After all, everybody is different and people join groups or movements based on their own personal experiences. Do I understand maybe SOME of the reasons that people joined? Yes. People hit a point within themselves where they feel they have no other way to go and they join some kind of group like this. Whether conditions are actually that bad is a matter of personal perception, however the person views his/her situation. So I understand, theoretically, the larger social, economic, and political forces that freak people out. But I'm still not entirely sure how a person joins a group that actively seeks to destroy others. I'm not clear on that yet. And maybe that's a good thing.

So as an out lesbian, with self-professed leftist and progressive views, I had a look at the opposite side of the spectrum, in an effort to understand how the opposite position works, hoping that having this knowledge will help me with my own political and social activism. Sun Tzu said in "The Art of War" that "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

For me, learning how, what, and why the extreme right thinks allows me to see, now, how it works, and how to educate others on its divisive messages. And this work also forced me to look at the dark corners of my own psyche. Ironically, this research brought me closer to myself. I excavated my own soul during this process, questioned my own beliefs, my own biases, everything that might be hiding in those corners. It was a terrible, painful, depressing journey that

left me spiritually and emotionally exhausted for a while. But I found my way through it and I think I'm a better person for it.

What do you think of THE ASD PLAN (Americans for Self-Determination)? Is that just a wolf in sheep's clothing?

Andi: Dang, D...making me dredge up more ickiness! ANYWAY--Jeff Anderson (NOT the guy who was in the movie "Clerks"), who is a known white nationalist and separatist, came up with this idea, I believe. He's based in Falls Church, VA, which had a history of white supremacist and white nationalist groups and he takes his plan to rallies that include harder white supremacist groups like the National Alliance. The difference between white supremacists and white nationalists is that nationalists claim that they're not racist, that in fact, every race should have the right to have its own territory and rules. They're more about white "nationhood" and thus, white separation. It's segregation without the violence. They hope. For my part, I have a problem with segregation. Anderson would argue that I've been indoctrinated with politically correct liberal rhetoric while I would fire back that no, my life experiences have demonstrated that I don't need segregation. I have a real problem with rules that tell me who I can and can't hang out with. If Anderson wants to have his enclave with like-minded people, sure. Buy up some land, have a little compound, but don't be telling ME that this is what's best for me and others. I'd like to make that decision for myself, thank you very much.

Anderson is a smart guy and he couches his arguments in a reasoned, articulate approach, which is what the white nationalist movement wants from its members and leaders. They want educated, articulate people who can come across as common-sense and with proposed solutions to "racial tensions." The ASD says that the only way we as a culture in America can survive is by dividing up the U.S. and allowing each racial group and other groups (Anderson magnanimously suggests that feminists and gays can live in their areas, since they do already) to have a piece of territory and do whatever they want with it and live however they want. In my book, that's ghettoization. I mean, something like 68 percent of this country's population identifies as white. So guess who's going to get the biggest chunk of the country? And what happens if you're a white person who is also gay? Do you have to live with the whites? Or is the chunk that's designated for white people ONLY for heterosexual, Protestant, middle-class whites?

I also disagree with Anderson's arguments about "race." Biologically speaking, there is more "racial" diversity WITHIN a so-called "race" group than across races. In other words, take a group of people who identify as white and you'll find, on a genetic level, more diversity than you would if you took, say, a person from each "race" and put them in a group and compared that group's genetic profiles to each other. And many of us don't identify JUST on the basis of race. I think of myself as "white" insofar as the privileges the color of my skin conveys in this country. But I'm also a woman and a feminist and a lesbian and a writer and a reader and a traveler...I have things in common with other people that transcend "race." So I sure don't want to go spend the rest of MY Life hanging out in some white enclave with a bunch of people I have nothing in common with beyond the color of my skin.

I consider Anderson's views an outgrowth of the "Territorial Imperative" that a lot of white supremacist groups (and separatist groups) were pushing in the 1970s and 1980s, in which they wanted the Pacific Northwest (along with Wyoming) as their "homeland." Well, again, what exactly IS a white homeland? Define "white." After all, just because you're "white" doesn't mean you share ethnicity or heritage (or class) with other white people. My ancestors came from Germany and Poland. Other white people's ancestors may have come from Ireland or Norway or Italy or Russia or Eastern Europe or France...and these are all distinct ethnic and regional cultures that have some things in common, but not most things. So who gets to choose what "white culture" is in this proposed homeland? And who gets to make the rules? And why is this ASD any different than Jim Crow? Because most assuredly, once you separate yourself from others, you're creating a barrier and a boundary that YOU control, and usually to the detriment of others. So suppose I ended up in one of these homelands for white people and my friends in the

Hispanic area wanted to come and visit--well, seems to me that Mr. Anderson would want some proof that they weren't staying (because according to him, the races can't live together) and therefore would require some kind of paperwork and ID and permit and all that bureaucratic stuff to ensure that once they came in, they were under surveillance and then they left. And what if I met someone who was not white and I wanted to hook up with that person? Where would WE live? Anderson seems to assume that all white people and all people who aren't white want to gravitate toward "their own kind" and that "own kind" thing hinges exclusively on "race." I don't buy that. I gravitate toward people with whom I have things in common--political beliefs, spiritual beliefs, interests, goals. My "race" is not something I base my friendships or relationships on. I don't think: "oh, geez. Can't hook up with that person because she's black."

In other words, Mr. Anderson has the right to go buy up his homestead and invite his white friends along. And he can set the boundaries of his homestead and proselytize his beliefs--after all, that's part of what this country is founded on and separatism as a concept has a long history here. However, I don't want to live in his world and I sure don't want it imposed on the rest of us who may not believe that way.

ANYBODY'S welcome in MY bunker, dang it. <G!>

Land of Entrapment's K.C. is such a brilliant literary creation, where did she come from?

Andi: Okay, wait. As in she herself is brilliant? I'll let her know you propped her. She was whining the other day about how I don't appreciate her genius (ungrateful wench! I give 'em life, and THIS is the thanks I get!).

K.C. and I have a long history. We started our relationship around 1993, when I moved to New Mexico and I was so desperately homesick for Colorado that I started writing a novel in the wake of a break-up (um, yeah. One of mine). In that novel (handwritten, notebook paper), K.C. returned to Boulder, Colorado. She was not a sociologist--she was actually an ex-cop in that early incarnation--and she certainly didn't give a rat's ass about white supremacists. Anyway, about halfway through this project, which a good friend of mine and I dubbed "The Bad Lesbian Novel" (BLN), I stopped writing and got caught up in that dang research of my own. I thought about the BLN every now and again, and I liked K.C., but we just weren't ready to commit.

K.C. resurfaced in 2006 in "Land of Entrapment" with a Ph.D. in sociology from UNM and the last name "Fontero" and she was now ready to pick up where she left off with me. In LoE her expertise is in political and social movements, especially the white supremacist right. So she does give a rat's ass about them now. K.C. is on a typical academic track--finishes dissertation, applies for post-docs (post-doctorate work), gets one, and moves to Austin to teach and research at the University of Texas. A post-doc is basically a fellowship where an institution or university pays you to research for a year, two years, or maybe even three. In return, you teach a few classes in your field. But the stipulation is, you generally have to write a book during that post-doc, to prove that you didn't waste it. That's what K.C.'s in the process of doing when her ex shows up to ask for help in locating her sister back in Albuquerque.

K.C.'s character is thus based on my own experiences in academia and in research. Her professional interests are also a reflection of my own, and her academic track is probably what mine would have been if the teaching bug had bitten me and I'd gone the traditional academic route. K.C. and I share a perfectionist streak with regard to our work, we both live in our heads quite a bit and we approach the world analytically. She's rather funny, but she's honest about who she is and she admits her shortcomings. She also has people to keep her in line and remind her of who she is and where she's from, something I hope everyone has in their lives. Her family background is different than mine, and her high school experience was much different than mine. She's driven in terms of her research, she loves teaching and doing the whole academic thing,

but she doesn't take herself too seriously. Usually. When she does, it's annoying as hell.

In other words, K.C. is the colleague I wish I had when I was slogging through my doctorate. And she's the one I'd co-edit nonfiction anthologies with. K.C. is the one I'd call to ask for her take on something I'm working on, and she's the one I'd ask to assess something I'd written about the right wing. And when she gets too big for her britches, I just pull MY degrees out and tease the crap out of her. Invariably, she pouts and then laughs. She's very down-to-earth and she enjoys hiking, biking, beer, and zombie movies. In case you wondered. <G>

How would you most like readers to respond to *Land of Entrapment*?

Andi: "HOT DAMN THAT ROCKED! Let's buy Andi's next book, read all her stories, and tell all our friends, family, and strangers on the street to do the same!"

I sure hope that people enjoy it. I hope they like the characters, get into the dialogue, and get at least a little caught up in the story and where it takes them. And then maybe they'll go to Albuquerque and hang out at the places K.C. and the crew did. I didn't make the restaurants or neighborhoods up, y'all. So...road trip? <g>

Which of your characters has been hardest to write?

Andi: Geez, this is like being in therapy.

"So tell me, Andi...how do you feel about your characters? And does this have anything to do with your childhood? Or your mother?"

I have characters in stuff that's unpublished (at this point...<cross yer fingers!>) that have been kind of difficult but not because I hated them. Even the characters that aren't so nice I like writing. What makes a character difficult for me is "doing that character justice." So, if we're talking about LoE, the most difficult was Sage Crandall, the photographer. First, she's being filtered mostly through K.C.'s POV, and second, she's a free spirit but also very grounded and I found that hard to capture at first. Sage is not that "woo-woo new-age crystal-chompin' hippie chick" though she has some of those elements to her. She's a really interesting mixture because she grew up in a sort of "frontier" existence outside Sheridan, Wyoming, in a cabin with no running water. Her father had some problems and he was gone most of the time and when he was around, he was not a nice man because of his problems. So Sage learned from an early age to take care of herself and her younger brother as well as their mom, to some extent. She's the quintessential western libertarian in some ways--she's a great shot with a gun; she's hunted and fished; she's an outdoorswoman--but she also has this kind of "woo-woo" side to her, and she expresses it through her photography and through some of the ways she approaches life. She's able to understand the essence of something or someone in a short period of time because with Sage, there's no pretense. She's extremely intuitive and K.C. learns very early that you cannot bullshit her. Sage just knows things. She's able to pick up on people's unspoken edges. She is who she is, and because she grew up close to the land, she's in tune with natural forces, maybe, beyond the understanding or recognition of most people. Also, I wanted her to have this complete quirky spastic side but then a really mature serious side, the combo of which makes her endearing, I think, but also a force to be reckoned with. K.C.'s reactions to her, I hope, are able to convey that.

But writing her in such a way to make sure she's NOT that complete stereotype "woo-woo chick from Santa Fe" was difficult. I had to draw on a lot of different people to capture her and I think she turned out how I wanted her to--at least she seems happy with it. I'm sure she'll let me know if she's not...<lol>

Did you write when you were younger? Are there any "I'd rather this story never saw publication" manuscripts lying around?

Andi: short answer: That would be a BIG hell to the YES. To both.

Long answer: I've always had stories in my pointed little head. I was always making up scenarios about pirates and space exploration/contact with alien cultures. And I was way into things like ghosts and vampires and werewolves. I read constantly then and I read constantly now. When I was growing up, I read all kinds of adventure stuff like Tarzan and John Carter of Mars (Edgar Rice Burroughs). I read the classics, too, and I remember changing things in the stories as I was reading to better reflect my own thoughts and my own nascent lesbianism and identity as a woman. I could not for the life of me understand why Jo from "Little Women" would hook up with a guy. I mean, it was SO obvious to me that she clearly shouldn't have been on that road. So in MY alt-universe "Little Women," Jo hooked up with ME, dang it! Anyway, I started writing little vignettes and poems when I was in grade school, though my mom recently showed me some stuff I did before that--little stories about dogs and things like that. In crayon. I was probably three or so. And I've been obsessed with Halloween since I was a kid, so I remember writing creepy Halloween stories in grade school and creepy poems, too.

In high school, I had teachers who encouraged their students' creativity and I started writing more poetry and a few short stories. At 15 or so I wrote my first novel, which was an atrociously bad spec fic thing (fantasy) that dealt with a wizard, a disowned prince, and some swordswoman chick he hooked up with on his adventures. I totally identified with the prince in that story (he got the girl, after all), but I wasn't ready yet to deal with the fact that I really wanted WOMEN to hook up WITH EACH OTHER in my stories. So I instead identified with the male lead in that novel (we can get all Freudian about that if you want, but there it is). Oh, I hand wrote that pup. An entire package of loose-leaf lined notebook paper. It's probably a good 200 pages long, front and back. And because misery loves company, I wrote a sequel. I was probably 16 when I started that but I don't think I finished the sequel (which is definitely a good thing for the reading public! HA!) because right about the time I started getting ready to go to college, I was 17 and I was really hardcore into spec fic but was leaning more toward sci fi. When I got to college, I started writing another novel that actually became the basis for "Prototype," whose synopsis is available on my website. I have re-written that thing--from scratch each time--maybe four times now over the course of 20 years. That one might yet see the light of day. I'm dinking around with it still. I really like the main character but I'm thinking I'm going to scrap the entire premise of that novel and take the character to an entirely different setting. We'll see.

So I spent my college years writing bad angst-y-gothic poetry because I was struggling with coming out and had all these unrequited crushes on all these women. After I officially came out to myself (I was 19), I continued to write more poetry but it took on a decidedly lesbian cast and sort of a "seeker" tone. I notice a lot of landscape references in my poetry from that era, and I remember that I was trying to find my place in the world. I felt much more comfortable writing my true feelings about who I was during those years, though, and some of that poetry's pretty good; I have had a few poems published here and there. I am a completely untrained poet and don't pretend to be some kind of super-gifted mystical poet-type. I just happen to write it now and again and during my college years--especially the 10 years after I came out--poetry, for whatever reasons, was the way I expressed myself creatively.

When I went to grad school in Denver, I suddenly started writing all kinds of fantasy-based short stories starring women characters who hooked up together. I wasn't yet comfortable writing sex between the characters, but I definitely got in some foreplay. At this point--around 1990--I began submitting stories to Marion Zimmer Bradley for consideration for that "Sword and Sorceress" anthology series she oversaw. I think I submitted three or four stories at various times, none of which got accepted but each time she wrote a personal rejection letter pointing out something I did well, something I needed to work on, and she hoped that I'd keep writing and she signed the letters. I really appreciated that she took that kind of time to let me know what she thought, given the hundreds of submissions she must've had to wade through. I started writing another novel around 1991--this one fantasy. And that became the basis for "The Thick of It," whose synopsis is also on my website. It needs another re-write and it'll get one. Not sure where that'll go,

ultimately. Anyway, that plus MZB's personal rejection letters sort of stayed in the back of my mind, which might have been a good thing because I didn't write fiction again for a good ten years. Instead, I was caught up in grad school and nonfiction writing. I did continue to write poetry, however, and I took that habit to New Mexico to pursue my doctorate. I also journal a lot, and poems are scattered throughout my journal entries.

So, yeah. I have a lot of stuff I've written over the years that will not see the light of day. It sucks! HA! But I'm not necessarily embarrassed about it. I have VASTLY improved over the years, and I can see that in the different eras of my writing. I'm an archaeologist, after all, and I track change over time. That's how I view the early writing in my own life. Beginnings. No, it is absolutely not publishable. But it foreshadows things to come. It's my own past and it reflects different eras of my life and for that, I appreciate it. Writing--both the good and the bad--has always been part of me and my life, but it's changed a lot over time and it will continue to change--hopefully for the better.

We can all hope that!

Have you kept those letters from Marion Zimmer Bradley?

Andi: Yes. I guess I just needed to know that somebody really did read my stuff. I kept copies of everything I submitted and all the fiction projects I was working on in folders and the letters just stayed in there for years. She typed them (it was ol' skool in the late 1980s and early 1990s) on small sheets of blue paper and she signed them by hand. In the first, she said I wrote poetically and nicely but I needed to work on my tale-telling skills. And she was so right. In the third rejection she told me to try again. But I got caught up in writing my master's paper and applying to Ph.D. programs and then the rigors of a doctoral program...I never did submit to that anthology again.

What do you think she'd say of your work today?

Andi: Dang, Deven. You're a scary evil twin to have! Questions like that!

I have this image of me sitting in that waiting room to the afterlife in that movie "Beetlejuice." And I'm waiting for MZB to come on up to the counter and have a chat and all. Like visitation in prison or something. Oh, look. Here she comes. She's got her glasses on and she's trying to place me...I'll help...

A: YO, MZB! What up, girl? Remember me? The chick with the lame-ass pen names back in the day?

MZB: <recognition dawning> Why, Andi. How are you? And you know I'm no longer taking submissions for S&S. <looks at me over her glasses with an expression like "hello? You're talking to me in the waiting room to the afterlife...?">I see you worked on your ABC's.

A: Yes, ma'am. Apply Butt to Chair. Good advice, that.

MZB: I'm pleased with how you've been working on plot and tale-telling. Much better, how you've managed to tell a story now that makes sense and that has logical parts. Oh, and I must say that I do like your characters better. They just weren't speaking to me in your early submissions. Rather flat. Frustrating read because I think there might have been some potential there. But it was quite endearing that you admitted you were just starting to try this writing stuff out. I could tell that was certainly the case. You did have a poetic style that I rather liked and that I thought would work well with fantasy. Still, I'm glad to see you've trimmed your adverbs and adjectives to minimums.

A: Well, I put a historian trained in journalism on my dissertation committee and she whipped me into shape right quick. Whew. If I had a dollar for every time she pointed out passive voice and excessive adjectives and adverbs, I'd be able to buy myself a spot on the space station.

MZB: <laughs> It's a good thing, too, that you got into editing. It really helps you see the flaws in your writing. But do use your betas. Because I think you should work a bit more with your first-person POV. And you do still need to work on your adverbs. Tighten up those dialogue tags, as

well.

A: Thanks. You know I saved those rejection letters you sent. That was pretty cool, that you took the time to write to me in the midst of all those submissions. I appreciate that.

MZB: You took my advice to heart. So it was worth my writing them.

A: Dang, I wish I HAD sent something else to S&S before you...well, you know. Ended up on the other side of the counter here.

MZB: <smiles sort of sadly>Well, it wasn't to be. And besides, you had to find your own path. I'm glad that I might have played a role in that, however small.

A: Yeah. Thanks. Um...I guess I'd better go. Thanks for talking to me. And thanks for the tips.

MZB: Certainly. Good luck to you and remember your ABC's and make sure you never stop wanting to learn. Bye, now.

And I'd hightail it outta there. Bad lighting.

What would your letter to God say if you were to write one?

Andi: You know, that letter would come back "return to sender...no such address..."

So I'd have to do IM to check in with Ms. Head Honcha. She's way busy, after all:

A: yo yo yo la Reina de Todos, got a minnit?

G: 'sup, A? Been a while.

A: yeah, my bad. You know how self-centered we as a species get.

G: <lol> no comment

A: aiiight, so I have a coupla questions, yup.

G: <g> here we go...yeah?

A: what's the deal with all this funk-ed-up weather?

G: girl, you know I move in mysterious ways. Trade secret, 'naw mean?

A: is it our fault or what?

G: c'mon. What do you think?

A: so it is?

G: <eyeroll smiley> you know y'all haven't been the best about keeping stuff clean...

A: DANG. Well, that's what I was thinkin', yeah. So how do we fix it?

G: even if I gave you the 411, you think anybody would listen to you?

A: d'oh.

G: you know what happens when anybody says they hear me talkin' to 'em.

A: <<YIKES smiley>>

G: <g>

A: so we have to figure this out for ourselves?

G: well...I might send a little inspiration along. But don't expect a hallelujah chorus. After all, it's your mess...so hit me with another question.

A: ok...if we're such the pinnacle of life forms and all that, how come we're such a**heads to each other?

G: ROTFLMAO

A: nah, fer real. What's up with that? How come we can't share the love? These huge brains and we're all fightin' each other and acting like haters. And we use YOUR name to say it's aiiight to do that. What's wrong with us?

G: <shaking head>you have powers for good and evil. And the ability to sort it out. That's the wonder and the pits of being human.

A: not sure I like that deal, Big G. Cuz doesn't look from this angle like we're sorting for greater good.

G: <shrug>had this chat with Descartes back in the day about free will.

A: what'd you tell him?

G: a joke.

A: ??

G: he didn't get it...a little ahead of his time. But he got it later.
A: share?
G: sure. Descartes walks into a bar. Bartender serves him a beer. Descartes drinks it. Bartender asks him if he wants another. Descartes says "I think not" and disappears. <<grin smiley>>
A: ah, dang. So that's where my dad got that! That was YOU started that joke?
G: maybe.
A: ok wait...free will and "I think therefore I am." I'm not getting the connection between that and how we stop being haters.
G: if you didn't believe you had free will, & if you didn't believe you are what you think...what kind of species would you be?
A: cuddly?
G: LOL
A: geez. Maybe we'd be like the Borg or something. I don't know. Can't you just make us stop being haters?
G: is that free will?
A: but all this death and nastiness...is that a price for free will?
G: it's not about that, A. Think yin/yang, maybe. Good and bad. Balance.
A: so we're both awesome and potentially seriously flawed.
G: maybe. <g>
A: <grumble> you don't make this easy.
G: neither do you! LOL. Hey, gotta go, A.
A: hold up a sec--are you REALLY the Big G?
....<<pause>>
A: Big G?
G: what do YOU think?
A: Aw, geez. <<pfft smiley>> Thanks for the time, BG. Much appreciated.
G: sure thing, girl. 'Til next time. Later.

You remind me of the energizer bunny, cute and keeps going and going and going. How does the significant other handle all of that NRG?

Andi: She laughs. A lot. Actually, we both laugh quite a bit. Laughter is really important in my life because it's reminded me that even in the midst of some not-so-great times, I still had the ability to enjoy, however momentarily, a bit of humor. My folks are really funny and my sister is hysterical, so laughter has always been part of my psyche. My partner is funny, too, but in a sort of sly, dry humor way. She'll come out with some zingers that will just make me cry I'm laughing so hard. Good ab workout, laughter.

And I don't like mean-spirited humor. I think the essence of good humor and, frankly, of a kind soul, is the ability to poke gentle fun at yourself first, and then at others, without denigrating them. Humor can be a wonderful way to forge bonds and break ice between people and frankly, it's a good way to "get over yourself" and to find the beauty in yourself and others. It's forgiving and cleansing and helps instill a lot of my energy. I'm an intensely curious person. I like to meet people and find out about them. It's such a gift, communication, and I have been so very fortunate to meet amazing people from all walks of life, from all parts of the globe. You never know who you're going to meet, and I try to be open to possibility every day. Hmm. My partner thinks I'm cute, too. Thanks, Deven! Though the Bunny looks way better in those shades than I could.

Did you ever unearth anything interesting on those excavation and survey teams?

Andi: If you're asking whether I found dead people ("I see dead people!"), no. I did a lot of survey work in Routt County forests (northwestern Colorado) and also in southern Colorado and eastern Colorado. Most of that stuff was evidence of either paleolithic Native peoples--older than 5000 years BP (before present--NOT British Petrol!) and was primarily "lithic" material. That is, mostly projectile points ("arrowheads") and stone flakes of said tools. I did find a lot of discarded license plates, old tires, one busted-up Barbie doll, a 1930s-era whiskey bottle, and a live tortoise on

those surveys, though.

The excavation work I did was at an Ancient Puebloan (formerly "Anasazi") site on private land outside Ramah, New Mexico, which is located in the western part of the state near the Arizona border. That's pronounced "RAY-muh." Ramah is an interesting town. It's largely Mormon, which makes for interesting cultural mergings between that and the nearby Ramah Navajo and Zuni Reservations. We uncovered a storage room, as evidenced by the type of pottery we found. The room had also probably been used as a trash midden at one time because we uncovered turkey bones (part of the Ancient Puebloan diet) and broken pottery in newer layers from a variety of traditions--types used for cooking as well as for storage and ceremonial purposes.

Ancient Puebloans had different styles of pottery they used for different purposes. Much like we have different types of pots and pans for different purposes. "Corrugated ware" was gray, and formed usually with the "coil" method, as most pots were. That means a potter would take pieces of clay and roll them between her (most potters were probably women) palms to create "ropes" of clay. Then she would coil a rope into a circle. She'd take another rope of clay and set it on top of the other and smooth them together. She'd stack ropes of clay like this until she had a large vessel. Then she'd dry it, paint it, glaze it, whatever she needed to do before she fired that pot. Since corrugated ware was just going to be used for household cooking and wasn't for anything fancy schmancy (so no painting), she didn't spend too much time smoothing it out, so you'd be able to see the ridges and pinch-marks that she created when she was making the pot.

One of the most awesome things, I thought, about finding corrugated ware was that sometimes, if you were lucky, you'd see a fingerprint in the sherd (not "shard"--archaeological terminology is "potsherd"). I found a few with fingerprints and it blew my mind, to think that I was holding in my hand something that a woman 800 years before me had made. It was almost spiritual, to put my own finger on the spot where her fingerprint was, and to imagine what her life was like, what she might have been thinking while she made that pot. Sometimes a woman would set the pot on a woven mat prior to firing and that pattern would appear in the surface, which helped indicate the type of weave they used to make that mat and possibly the type of material it might have been.

We also excavated a ceremonial room, in which we found an almost complete pot in the more formal black-on-white style with geometric designs. That means the pot was white with painted black designs on it. We found a lot of lithic material as well as potsherds out the ying-yang, and a few bones, but the bones were animal. I'm actually glad we didn't find human remains, because I always felt it was bad ju-ju, to go digging things like that up. It was something I had a real struggle with during my archaeo days--trying to balance the very valuable information we could get from an excavation with approaching the project with respect for the people who had been there and who might have left the bodies of their dead there.

I was an assistant crew chief, so I was familiar with all the rooms under excavation. Once, on a trip to Gallup (NM) that field season, I found this fake plastic skeleton in a tourist gift shop. It was a T-Rex skeleton to scale. The thing was about 8 inches tall. You know where this is going, don't you? Yeah. I took that along with a Peter Frampton 8-track I bought at a Gallup Goodwill (for a quarter, if you must know) back to camp. I waited until after our labwork (we had a makeshift lab set up, where we catalogued the artifacts we'd excavated) and "went for a walk." The excavation was on the other side of a small butte, so if you were in camp, you couldn't see the site. Anyway, I went and buried the plastic skeleton in one pit in an area of sterile fill dirt, just under the surface. The next day, the crews went to their respective pits and started working. Well, sure enough, I hear this "BONES! I FOUND BONES! INTACT SKELETON!" It was all I could do not to laugh my ass off. The crew chief goes running over there with his trowel and scale stick for a photograph. The woman who "found it" was working on it with her brush, and she was all psyched and then she kind of stopped, looking at it and she says: "hey...wait a minute..." and the crew chief (who didn't know I did this) busted out laughing. Everybody was standing there and everybody started laughing. Well, we took official looking "in situ" photos and it became part of the slide show for the end-of-the-season audience back in Denver. Anyway, I waited a few days then buried the Peter

Frampton 8-track in another pit, in sterile dirt. So the next day, we're all working along and sure enough, "I FOUND SOMETHING!" And then she started laughing as she pulls this 8-track out. Everybody else started laughing and the woman who found it says: "Wow, these people were sure PRIMITIVE. An 8-track!" She kept it as a memento of the summer.

One of the worst things I saw was further up that canyon (I'm not going to say where this is, okay?). We went with the crew chief to scout potential sites for excavation but the locals said it had been pothunted. That's a cardinal sin. Pothunting is basically stealing artifacts from either excavated or unexcavated sites and selling said artifacts on the black market of antiquities. Now, I want to make something really clear. Archaeologists aren't really interested in the monetary value of an artifact. That's not the point of the artifact. What archaeologists need is to know the context in which that artifact was found so they can discern living patterns and use patterns of the culture that created it. The artifact itself is useful as a record of the past--it'll tell you available materials, something about climate, perhaps, and how people might have envisioned aesthetics (the types of designs they used). Archaeologists are interested in preserving these artifacts as a record of cultural knowledge, not because they have "monetary value."

All right, that said, pothunters don't give a rat's ass about the context of an artifact and they will go and take things from sites to sell. To get to artifacts, they will often use a backhoe and literally rip into the site, destroying a hell of a lot of it to salvage a little for the antiquities market. So we went to this site up the canyon--it had to have been a multi-storied pueblo, from the size of the mounds. Pueblo sites often collapse over time and form mounds that actually end up preserving quite a lot as layers of sediment build up over the collapsed area. Anyway, it took up a lot of acreage. However, pothunters had managed to get a backhoe out there (and this is rugged territory) and there were these huge trenches gouged right through the mounds, leaving horrible destruction in their wake. Like someone had come with a knife and torn somebody open--that's what it looked like and that's how it felt, in a weird way. I saw what probably were human remains scattered all over the place amidst broken pots and chunks of earth that the backhoe had dumped in the search for viable artifacts. I can't really explain how it felt to see this. It was devastating on some levels, and so horribly, horribly disrespectful to the Ancient Puebloans and also to the modern Native peoples, who treated the site as sacred. And the "feel" of the place was off. In other words, you could tell something bad had happened there, something had disrupted the natural flow of things. Disturbing something like that with bad intentions can unleash some seriously bad ju-ju. And you could feel it, if you stood there for a while. It was like a discordant thrum really deep in your gut. That's what I felt, anyway. I asked one of the other crewmembers what she thought--she was half Choctaw--and she said that it felt like someone had cut a piece out of her spirit.

In spite of things like that, being an archaeologist got me in touch with landscape in ways I never would have otherwise. It's a very intimate thing, carefully going through dirt and gently removing evidence of a human past from the earth. There's something profoundly primal, in some ways, about being that close to the soil, about making a connection between your skin and the object somebody hundreds of years before you left behind. I learned how to read topography as an archaeologist, not only with my eyes, but with my hands and my feet because I have excavated barefoot so as not to disturb a layer too much with my boots. I wouldn't trade those days, though I can't say I miss working as an archaeologist. It's physically demanding, difficult, painstaking, detail-oriented work often done in the worst conditions. But I do still use some of the methodology I learned as an archaeologist in how I approach research and also how I approach things as mundane as hiking. It'll always be a part of me, though I'm no longer part of it.

Interesting question, Deven. And of course I took you on a long, meandering journey through it!

Hey, I don't mind in the least. I'm learning more than I expected I would and enjoying every minute of it.

Andi: Good god, I'm still a long-winded academic. Bless my heart! She done fell out the speech tree and hit every branch on the way down!

LOL Which writers do you most enjoy reading and are there writers who have influenced your own work?

Andi: Wowzers. That's a big question. I read lots of authors. I'm always reading stuff by people I haven't read before to expand my horizons, so I don't really have a set "MUST READ" kind of thing going. And my faves might shift year to year as I discover new things and branch out and change. I also read lots of nonfiction--I particularly enjoy travel writing. I'm currently reading Alice Steinbeck's "Without Reservations: The Travels of an Independent Woman," about a woman who travels by herself through Europe while she metaphorically is traveling through herself. I really like stuff like that.

Another book I read that I just loved was Sarah MacDonald's "Holy Cow: An Indian Adventure." It's a biography/travel memoir and metaphor, about MacDonald's experiences in India. She's an Australian radio correspondent and the book opens with her in an airport trying to leave India in the late 1980s with her friend. Sarah HATED India but a beggar there at the airport reads her palm and tells her she'll be back for love. "Yeah, right," she thinks and sure enough, a few years down the line, she hooks up with this guy who's also a journalist and gets posted to India. So she goes with him and thus begins her painful, funny, inspiring journey through her own soul as she explores the spiritual traditions of India and her place in the world. Her descriptions of India and its cultures and tradition are so good that you can literally taste the saffron and feel the explosion of colors at the festivals. Great stuff.

Jon Krakauer is a great writer as well. "Into the Wild" and "Into Thin Air" are just exquisitely rendered stories that really put you in the moment with the people in the books. I also like Hampton Sides--check out "Americana: Dispatches from the New Frontier." It's a series of essays he did traveling throughout America and finding the weird and wonderful in this country. I discovered Jon and Hampton because I read "Outside" magazine religiously and they've had pieces therein. One of the most semi-autobiographical accounts of immigrant life in America is Francisco Jiménez's "The Circuit." It's a young adult novel, but conjures images of Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath." Powerful stuff.

And on the macabre side, I read lots of forensics manuals that I score from people in the business and from presses that publish stuff like that. I also read lots of history and anthropology monographs because I try to keep up in my fields. I do review books in history that I review for historical journals, so I do still have a foot in academia.

I do read lesfic--I read lots of different writers, published and unpublished. I've enjoyed stuff by Lori Lake, Karin Kallmaker, JD Glass, Jane Fletcher, Gerri Hill, Joan Opyr, Mari SanGiovanni, Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, Paula Offutt, Jove Belle, Barb Clanton, Nicola Griffith...geez, the list is long. I read across genres, as well. Check out Academy of Bards and e-scribblers.com to see some of the best-kept secrets out there. I read other fiction as well. I enjoy Annie Proulx's stuff (love her descriptions of western landscapes), Terry Tempest Williams (for the same reasons), and Jennifer Bové's short pieces, and I do enjoy Amy Tan's work. OH, and Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. An interesting writer I worked with in New Mexico is Kate Horsely, whose writing I'd call literary-historical fiction based in the American West. Try "A Killing in New Town" for a taste of her stuff. Lyrical but tightly interwoven plot lines. I like Rudolfo Anaya--a true Nuevomexicano who captures the essence of New Mexico and the Southwest--and Manuel Ramos, whose mysteries star a Chicano lawyer based in Denver. I'm intrigued by Lucha Corpi, whose detective Gloria Damasco is heralded as the first Chicana detective to appear in American literature. Try "Eulogy for a Brown Angel" and "Cactus Blood" to see what Corpi and Damasco are all about. Corpi sets her plots against the backdrop of the 1970s Chicano Movement, which makes for some really cool integration of history with plot. And geek that I am, I like that kind of stuff.

Yeah, I'm a bit eclectic. Someone said once that if you want to be a better writer, you have to keep writing and do workshops and that sort of thing, but the other thing you have to do is read everything you can. Read across genres. Read fiction and nonfiction. But read so that you get a sense of how different people put sentences together and how they employ the mechanics of writing to their stories. I love reading anyway, so this was no big deal. But it's true. The more I read, the more I see things that I can do to tweak my own writing and the more I appreciate a turn of phrase or an expression or a plot twist or a great character. Anyway. Whew!

You're at a house party full of your fave authors. Who do you talk to first and why?

Andi: Andi gets invited to a house party, major stuffage in said house. Let's jet into her head for a bit:

Can't hear myself think, it's so loud in here. Holy crap, WHAT are they listening to...? Oh, thank god. Some Notorious B.I.G. just came on. THIS I can funk to. Okay...where's the food table...writers eat, don't they? Jesus, I think I just bumped into Anais Nin. No freakin' WAY. Is that really her? She looks GREAT...wench. And who knew Jane Austen liked Beck's? Whoa. Oh, food. I'm freakin' hungry...mmmm PIZZA. Okay, I'll go listen in to Carl Hiaasen chatting to Randy Wayne White...talking about the devastation of the Everglades...you GO, boys. Hammer on them sugar plantations and developers! This pizza is good...okay, need a beer...let's see...god it's loud...George Orwell can't dance. No big surprise. He probably thinks somebody's watching him too closely. Oh, no. Now I'll be singing that damn Rockwell song all night..."I always feel like...somebody's WATCHING me..." Crap. NO WAY Langston Hughes is drinking Jack Daniel's and lemonade! I SO pegged him as a wine guy! He looks good. Nice suit. Dang, Audre Lourde looks fabulous. She's drinking water. Good for her. If I had room, I'd fall on the floor right now and worship Maya Angelou. But somebody would step on my head. Okay...where the (*&#&^% is the kitchen? Ooops...Isaac Asimov just dropped salsa on the floor. Gabriel García Márquez stepped in it. Bummer. SHUT UP Isabel Allende is here! I have to talk to her! Must...get...to...damn. Lost her. But found the kitchen. YAY. Let's see...how the hell can Dorothy Parker just sit there writing? OH, she's getting Virginia Woolf's phone number. I wonder...nah. But Dorothy's kinda hot. I love that 1920s look...holy hell, I'm in the same room as Virginia Woolf. I can't stand it. I'm swooning here...okay, okay. Breathe. Just say hi. That's all I have to do. Breathe. Okay...no, I don't JUST want to say hi. I want to ask her why it is that--

V: What is that you're eating?

A: <<OMG...Virginia Woolf is talking to ME>>Pizza. Neopolitan style, with a light white sauce--olive oil-based--on a thin crust. Just a bit of tomato sauce, though I'm not sure why since it's not entirely necessary. But I'm not adverse to creative liberties. What's so good about it is the prosciutto and basil, both so fresh they're like eating spring.

V: <<smiles>>

A: <<OMG Virginia Woolf just smiled at me! I'm going to pass out!>>

V: This is what I was just saying. Why is it that people discuss what happens OVER food but they never talk about the food itself? Ah, the scintillating conversations and witty remarks that food engenders--well, why is it that no one says the PHEASANT stirred such a thought? Or the broth spiced just so? Or even the roast duck? I think this is something women observe more than men, unless said men are trained in the culinary arts. It seems this speaks further to the gulf between the sexes, in which it is EXPECTED that women know of food and nourishment and the processes that bring it to fruition while men are ever on the receiving end of such ministrations

A: But isn't it also a function of the company that gathers around food? A public space--a formal luncheon, for example--has traditionally been the domain of men and as such, were used for public discussions and also for business, which haven't been associated with women until recently, at least. And if you're gathering in a restaurant for a luncheon, chances are the chef IS male and was, even during your era.<<OMG where did that come from?>>

V: Cooking as a means of subsistence is the domain of women. As a means of entertainment and public appearances, it is the domain of men. Interesting. <<winks>>I'll ponder on this in my room

later.

A: <<OMG VIRGINIA WOOLF JUST MADE A JOKE!>> Make sure it's your own.

DP [Dorothy Parker]<<raises eyebrows, smirks>>Darling, it's a PARTY. Virginia might want to see someone else's room. Perhaps even mine.

A: Check before you go in. I saw Oscar Wilde dragging Henry Thoreau up the stairs earlier.

DP: <<rolls eyes>>Randy boys. Ginny, be a love...? <<holds glass up and motions toward bottle of gin on counter>>And YOU...we'll be consigning ourselves to the pool later, as soon as Ralpie gets Ernest out of it. DO plan on joining us...?

A: Um...<<fires worried glance at Virginia>>Is that a good idea?

DP: Oh, I'm fitting her with Molly Brown's life jacket. ZORA! How ARE you, darling?

Whew. It is freakin' LOUD in here...I need some air...

What stage of the process of creating a book is the most exciting and/or hard for you?

Andi: I love it all. I'll get an idea and if it's ready to go, the muses will really bug me. I won't be able to stop thinking about writing it so I'll have to get it out. If it's not ready, it's just sort of a brain tickle and I'll know that it's gelling.

The beginning is usually the most difficult because the characters and I are still setting up scenes and figuring out choreography and plot arc. We do several readings, sitting around in our directors' chairs with our scripts (which only have a few pages to 'em, since I leave lots of things open to exploration) and we'll try out the feel of the plot, the narrative, and audition new characters. Once I'm past Chapter 3, usually it just roars on out to the end. The whole process is exciting, I think, and it works for me as a writer to envision it as a collaborative venture between myself and my characters. Yeah, I know. That's weird.

How would you characterize your fiction?

Andi: "Fluff with an edge." I mean, it's fiction that I think qualifies as pretty decent beach- or vacation-reading (she says, hoping!). It's escapist in many ways, since you're hanging out with K.C. and the gang and they banter back and forth though they also address serious subjects with each other. That's the "fluff" part. I don't think "fluff" is a bad thing with regard to fiction. There are some darn good reads out there fiction-wise that stay with me but won't ever make the Nobel circuit. And that's perfectly okay. I love escaping through a good fiction read, love a couple hours where I'm entertained and maybe laughing and crying along with the characters. I like good dialogue and tension that builds through the course of a book and yeah, I also like a romantic spark between two characters and I have no problem with leaving an ending that could indicate a serial or one that doesn't. So I write what I like to escape with. I like characters that I feel I actually could know and I hope that readers find something in my characters that resonates with them. I hope they think: "yeah, I could totally see K.C. and Chris and Sage as real and I'd love to have a beer with them." Or whatever beverage they want.

The "edge" part...well, I hope people get a taste of New Mexico--Albuquerque in particular--which truly is a different kind of place. I hope that they get a sense of the Southwest, a sense of regional variation, and I hope they get a sense of larger issues that can affect smaller communities. I hope that they learn something about white supremacists through LoE and I hope they see how someone like K.C. conducts her research and does her investigation. Through "State," I hope readers get a sense of how Chris approaches her police work, how SHE conducts her investigations, a sense of her identity as a New Mexico Hispana, her relationships with some of her family members, and how police might build a case against a suspect. I like turning K.C. and Chris loose and watching them learn from each other and from the investigations. K.C. does get too big for her britches sometimes, but she's always willing to learn things and admit her mistakes.

Oh, and the other "edge" part is that these characters are also dealing with issues that readers might find resonate in real life. In LoE, K.C. has to deal with confronting her past with her ex, Melissa (bad break-up). She also has to confront the fact that her research into white supremacists has become very personal because Melissa's younger sister was dragged into it, as a result of some issues that readers will discover. K.C. then faces a growing attraction to someone and she's not sure what to do with that, since she's still feeling a little burned. These aren't necessarily earth-shaking issues. But they're things that you or I might have to deal with at some point, and sometimes all at once, and they can prove difficult to sort through as you're trying to figure out what the best course of action is. And it's stressful for K.C., being in close contact with her ex after three years of not speaking to each other, and having to find her ex's sister, someone whom K.C. came to think of as a younger sister. And some of these issues aren't going to be resolved in a way that brings dancing cherubs and nymphs scattering rose petals everywhere. Some aren't going to be resolved at all. At least not yet. But that's kind of like life. Sometimes things get resolved successfully, sometimes badly, and sometimes not at all. And there amidst the fluff lies an "edge." <laughs>

Did you need to do any extra research for your books?

Andi: Heck, yeah! I find what I need either on my bookshelves here at home, in my file cabinets, available online or in a library, or I'll ask people. For the book I'm writing now (NM 3 I'm calling it until it lets me know what its name is), I contacted the Office of the Medical Investigator in Albuquerque because I needed to know what procedure they use when retrieving a non-Indian body from Indian land. Federal and state jurisdiction apply to a certain extent, as does the jurisdiction of the closest non-Indian police, and Indian land is under federal jurisdiction when it comes to homicides, but local tribal police also have certain jurisdiction and I wanted to make sure that I got it right. I knew some aspects of this, since I have done a citizens' police academy in Albuquerque and I did have colleagues in NM who are Indian (as in Native American) from a variety of places in the country, and through conversations with them and my own work in history, I am aware of legal jurisdiction and the ways that the U.S. government and local and state governments have dealt with Indian land--and most of the time, it hasn't been in favor of those Indian peoples--so I wasn't entirely blind to what goes on, but I just wanted to make sure I was accurate.

For another manuscript I finished a few months ago, one of the characters is a veterinarian and though I have lots of experience dealing with large animal vets (I'm a product of a ranching community, after all), I wanted to really have some realism in this book so I contacted a buddy of mine who I went to high school with who went to vet school at Colorado State University, where my character went. I asked him the process of getting into vet school, the course track he did, how internships and residencies work, and what materials and medical supplies he'd need to conduct specific procedures. We had a great chat about it and I learned a lot about the inside politics of vet school and vet supplies. Really interesting. You'll see the results of that, I hope, in a couple of scenes in the book, which is based on the characters in my short story "From the Boots Up" (in "Under This Cowgirl's Hat," Torquere Press 2007). I'm currently cleaning that manuscript up for submission.

So though I do write on subjects I consider interesting and that I know something about, I nevertheless will check things for accuracy and spend a lot of time reading things and talking to people if necessary until I feel comfortable writing it. I love doing research anyway, because I learn so much and I meet some really interesting people in the process.

How do you feel about the cover artwork for your upcoming books?

Andi: Okay, this is a long and convoluted story. Huh. Kind of like all the OTHER answers I've given!

The cover for 'Land of Entrapment' is a design that I basically did. Now before everybody starts saying: "oh, she's a designer, too!"...stop. I'm not. I have absolutely no talent for it and will gladly own that I suck at it. However, I do know how things SHOULD work. Anyway, I developed the basic premise of LoE along with the designer that RCE assigned to deal with me. Bless her. I'm an editor, but I don't really get freaky about other editors editing my stuff. I DO get freaky about the covers of my books/stories/whatever. I worked in publishing with some award-winning designers and with a really good marketing department and I became cognizant of how important a book's "look" can be, especially if you're dealing with traffic in a bookstore or traffic online. Which means I got freaky about the cover for LoE. Some might remember the first incarnation of it on my websites.

Well, let's shorten this story. I decided to hire my own designer. Now, I haven't checked with her yet to reveal her name, so she'll remain nameless for now. I hired her to design "State of Denial." I provided a synopsis, we discussed what the book was about, and I gave her a bunch of my photos to use. A good designer either reads the manuscript, reads parts of it, and talks to the author to get an overall sense of things. Sure enough, she put a few samples together for me and I loved them. I picked one--the one you see on the RCE website--and then she offered to go back to LoE and mess around with it to bring it more in line with "State," since "State" is a spin-off of LoE and I had told her I really sort of wanted to get a "theme" look going for the New Mexico series. So I said, sure, no problem, and emailed her the photo (the photos that appear on both covers are mine--I took them, so no permission costs! YAY!) and she re-did it and I loved it. I love the one she did for "State," too. I love that they look related, that there are elements in common, and that they don't feature people. I don't actually like too many covers with people on them because I would prefer that readers come up with what the characters look like on their own. I don't want to influence them one way or the other. I like how the colors of the covers evoke New Mexico, how the photos provide another visual impact, and I like how the font she used has sort of a western but classic feel to it. It's the kind of font that says "serious and regional." A lot of people don't think about what goes into designing a book or a cover, for that matter. A book's cover is a visual blurb of what the story is about. It sets a mood, develops a tone, and can also indicate the genre just by using certain colors and fonts that work in tangent with the images the designer chooses to include on that cover. A cover should speak to the visceral within us. So something about it should make you want to look at it closer or to admire it and say: "dang. That's a nice cover." Will everybody love my covers as much as I do? Probably not. But the colors and the fonts are pretty cool, don't you think? <g>

At any rate, RCE has been wonderful about working with me with regard to my covers and I'm really grateful for that.

Did you collect anything as a child?

Andi: Dang right I did. Stones, bones, and "treasures." The latter included any interesting object I found on my many meanderings. I always had all kinds of stuff in my pockets as a kid. All kinds of rocks, small bones (I grew up in a rural area), bits of glass or metal that I found. I'm all about "found objects." To this day, I really like art that incorporates "found objects." Anyway, my mom was forever finding weird stuff in the laundry, but she never threw it out. She'd always leave it on my desk or my dresser where I'd find it, knowing that it probably had some kind of significance to it. My mom's pretty cool that way.

What is your proudest possession?

Andi: My education and the skills I've learned along the way. I worked really, really hard to finish the degrees I did and to become the person I am. That said, I never would have done it had I not had the childhood I did. My parents encouraged me and my sister to constantly explore

and constantly challenge ourselves. I was instilled with a lifelong passion to learn the moment I came into this world and I think it's largely because of my parents. And thinking about it (oh, no! SHE'S THINKING AGAIN!), it's not like I feel that I "own" or "possess" my education or the things that I learn. I mean, it's part of me and it's uniquely my style, but I'm all about sharing the love and I try to share the information I accumulate and use what I know to help others and teach them how to do things, as well. And now for a rousing chorus of "We Are the World..."

What do you think is your best work?

Andi: I can't really answer that definitively. I don't think in terms of either/or, after all. I like a lot of things about different projects I work on. I like the relationships K.C. has with Chris and Sage in "Land of Entrapment." I like the relationship Chris has with HER love interest in "State of Denial" and the way that Chris tracks the suspect and interacts with her cop partner. And I love writing about New Mexico. I really enjoyed the relationship Meg Tallmadge developed with Gina Morelli in "From the Boots Up" (so much so that I wrote a novel based on it). I liked some aspects of "Night Shift." I really enjoyed the river rat life in "Some Kind of River." And I liked Aidan O'Brien's explorations with Anne Sullivan in "The Kindness of Strangers." Plus, I just really liked writing about Butte in that piece. I also liked "The Collector" and my take on pirates. But then, I really like pirate stories.

I think of everything I write as a draft. Even the published stuff is a draft of sorts because I might read it a few months down the line and think: "dang. Why didn't I do THIS here?" My perspective is always changing and once something's written, it's static in a sense. Once it's published, it's frozen in a particular time and context. So everything is actually a draft. Now, I'm very proud of a lot of the things I write and there are things I'm satisfied with and glad to have written. I LOVE writing and I LOVE meeting my characters and watching a story unfold. And the more I write, the more I hope that the best is yet to come.<VBG>

Is there a message in your books you want your readers to know?

Andi: Wait...isn't that a Police song? Oh, no. That's "Message in a Bottle."

Sure. It's whatever a reader wants it to be. I'm trying to capture moments in time, slices of life, as my characters might experience them. It's not always "happy happy joy joy" in their lives. But it's not always grinding, unforgiving, tragic angst, either. It's just life as they live it and try to muddle through. There'll be good times, there'll be bad time. That's just how life is. There are also a variety of people in my characters' lives. All different walks of life, ethnicities, religious backgrounds, ages, nationalities, races, whatever. Because that's how most of us live. We have lots of different people in our lives, coming and going, expressing and depressing, doing the things that people do. Obviously, parts of ME are in my books and stories, since I wrote them, and my take on things are invariably layered in there, but I try to make reactions and actions true to characters' personalities as I've envisioned them. I may not particularly LIKE some of my characters, but usually, there are reasons that people behave the way they do and though it might not justify some of the things they do, at least it can explain them. With regard to the more odious things I write about, I hope to leave a reader with a sense that things are not always either/or. Life and people are complicated and can't be shoved into ready-made boxes most of the time. Oh, and it's a good thing to have lots of different people and perspectives in your life. Keeps you on your toes. And I'm all about dancing.<g>

Has your writing or a storyline ever overwhelmed you?

Andi: yes. Not fiction. That's a marvelous escape and though sometimes a storyline will get a little tangled and I'll have to step back and do some fixin', it's still a relief to write fiction. The nonfiction I've written on white supremacists was overwhelming and kicked my ass for a while. It's

very difficult--at least for ME--to immerse myself in such hateful things and compartmentalize it. How do you not take it personally when the crap you're reading put out by some white supremacist group says that all gays must die? I mean, how do you NOT absorb that on some level? Or that all Jews must die or Hitler was right or...whatever. Insert target group here. It makes your very soul feel dirty when you expose yourself to that kind of hatred and that kind of language. Words have power, after all. And they DO affect you, no matter what that little rhyme says. Researching and writing "Aryan Cowboys" was one of the most psychically, spiritually, and emotionally draining things I've ever done and at one point in my work--1996-1997--I couldn't write at all because I was so depressed. That was a long, dark night of my soul and no, I don't want to go to that place again. That said, I enjoy writing most of the nonfiction I do. My next project looks to be about something on gay rodeo. How much fun is THAT?<g>

Do you think because your fictional books detail White Supremacists, you're pushing an agenda or an argument?

Andi: Short answer: Not intentionally. "Land of Entrapment" and "State of Denial" are actually therapy for me. Because it IS all about me. <lol>

"Land of Entrapment" is the "Aryan Cowboy" catharsis. I wrote it in the wake of finishing up the final revisions of "AC" because I needed something that came to some sort of resolution. "AC" doesn't have a resolution. There is no happy ending. There's not even a real ending because these groups are still out there, people still join, and they still perpetuate and create ideology that serves to marginalize and destroy others. In LoE, I wrote what I knew--it's just luck of the draw that my scholarly expertise is in white supremacy and "lesser right" social and political movements. I could have researched plowing techniques in 19th-century Nebraska. But NOOOOOO! I had to pick white supremacists! I must have been hitting the cheeba hard that day...<har>

LoE became the alka-seltzer for my spiritual heartburn in the aftermath of "AC."

Agenda or argument in "Loe"? Well, if you find it, it's that I--that is, Andi--don't think it's a healthy social response to join white supremacist groups and actively seek to kill or hurt others.

"State of Denial" deals with a religious fundamentalism, which some argue is also part of the rightist spectrum and I do have some expertise in this aspect of rightist research, as well. "State" is a story that I actually have been thinking about since...mmm...1994 or thereabouts. I started writing it once around 1999, maybe, but it didn't feel right. The main character wasn't quite right. So that got back-burnered until "LoE." About halfway through "LoE", I knew that Chris Gutierrez, K.C.'s best friend, was perfect for the MC in "State" and that casting her as the detective that has to solve a couple of murders of young, possibly gay men would force her to deal with homophobia, both internal and external. What you'll discover, I think, in reading "State," is that though there is an element of religion here, you won't associate the denomination as a whole with what's happening in the story. That is, there is one person who is the most viable suspect in these murders and that person happens to have a strong religious affiliation. But what you'll come away with is not how awful religion is--which is not what I want a reader to come away with--but how awful homophobia is and how outside forces can twist things within people and make them feel trapped. "State" is a reaction to the absolute devastation I felt after the passage of Colorado's Amendment 2 in 1992, which really screwed GLBTQ people. I mean, REALLY screwed them. It was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1994, but the group in Colorado that worked to get that amendment passed stayed active even after the fact. Anyway, it took a few years for me to be able to write "State" because I hadn't met Chris yet.

So. Argument in "State," if you find it? Live your truth to the best of your abilities. Accept who you are and in so doing, respect others, whether you agree with them or not. Oh, and don't kill people.

At any rate, those are the only two fiction things I've written that deal with my expertise in the far right. The third NM book has nothing to do with that, nor does the 4th or the 5th. And the novel I wrote based on "From the Boots Up" is a romance--something I've never written in novel form--but I'm actually very pleased with it and really enjoyed it. The two spec fic novels I've written and all the short stories I've done also have nothing to do with rightist stuff. So if you consider these numbers, only about...what? 15 percent of what I've written at this point actually deals with my background in rightist research.

Agenda? Just writing lesfic in general indicates an agenda: LEZZIES RULE! <GRIN!!!>

If you had a Magic Carpet, where would you go?

Andi: YOUR HOUSE! WOOOOOOO!!! It's magic, right? So it would know where your house is. HEEEE! Barring that, I'd go to Ireland then Africa...hell, I'd do a world tour. Then off to Pern. Because I always wanted to Impress a dragon and be a dragonrider. Bronze dragon. Not just ANY dragon. A bronze. Of course, all the Anne McCaffrey fans are now going to kick my butt because "girls aren't supposed to Impress bronzes." Well, in MY reality, it'll happen. Oh, and then I'd want to go to every cool planet my fave writers think up.

Okay, I admit, I'm not really a fan of sci-fi novels, and I had to ask my friend (who adores Anne) what all that "bronze dragon" stuff meant lol So, from what I understand, the Bronze Dragon makes the choice, and that would indeed ruffle feathers. I take it you like to shake things up? Or is that just in fantasy?

Andi: Um...I'm kinda endearing about it. I hope. <g> And I do come by it naturally. Both my parents have the same streak. So my sister and I have it, too. And it's not so much about "liking to shake things up." It's just...I don't really think of it as "shaking things up." I think of it as expanding boundaries. After all, the only limits of our imagination are those we ourselves put on it. Let me continue with the McCaffrey example here. With regard to sci fi--like any genre, it's a product of its historical context and of the writer's background. McCaffrey started writing the Pern books in 1968--that's when the first was published, based on a Hugo-winning novella. She herself is actually fairly conservative and "traditional" and was when she wrote the books, which are pretty strict heterosexual gender role kinds of books with a few strong female characters, but nobody in Pern as McCaffrey wrote it strayed from the heterosexual imperative. What's intriguing is if you look at fanfic and gaming sites devoted to Pern, there's generally some friction between some who want to remain "true" to McCaffrey's vision and insist that Pern is homophobic and therefore, there aren't any gay people anywhere and others who, products of THEIR upbringings and changing historical contexts, think that's not accurate. I'm of the latter school. Every human culture has people who don't express a heterosexual imperative and who don't fit prescribed gender roles. McCaffrey's Pern settlers came from Earth (according to her), so it makes little sense that there wouldn't be gay people. But I digress.

Anyway--and here's my point, finally!--because I didn't really grow up in the context McCaffrey did--my mom is a political and social activist and rabble-rouser--I of course challenge things and re-think them in ways that fit MY worldview, which I work to expand all the time. Which was why, when I was growing up and reading things like the Pern books, I always changed them in my mind to include women whose primary affections were directed toward other women. I just figured McCaffrey hadn't considered that possibility and well, if I could envision MYSELF in that world, why should I not envision other kinds of stories there, as well? So I did. And I still do. McCaffrey herself has very strict rules about fanfic with regard to Pern; that's her prerogative, given that she created it. And I do respect that. However, I can still expand boundaries in my head and maybe in

the privacy of my own hard drive...I'm just sayin'.

Anybody who writes GLBTQ fiction is automatically shaking things up. I'm proud to be part of that tradition and I have lots of role models who were much braver than I, like Ann Bannon or James Baldwin, who wrote it when it was downright dangerous to write it (not to mention the publishers who actually published it!). They blazed trails and left them for others to see and follow and maybe create more trails. In some places in the world, it's STILL dangerous to write it. I'm fortunate to be where I am, because I can write it and I have options to get it published and have it reach a larger audience. The web, too, is an amazing tool to expand boundaries.

So...do I shake things up? I guess so. My mom calls me "eccentric." Some people say I have a problem with authority. I'd argue that I actually have a problem with misguided and inappropriate authority. <g> And I have a problem with stilted, rigid, thinking in which people say: "well, it's not done that way." How come? "Because it's not." That right there is an invitation to a challenge from yours truly. After all, one of the reasons I learned to play drums was because one of my male classmates in high school said girls couldn't be drummers. Holy crap. And this was the early 1980s! So damn right I learned how to drum!

I just like to think for myself and to consider many different approaches to things. If that makes me someone who "shakes things up," then I guess I am. Now I'm off to fight Thread with my bronze! WOOO! (the McCaffrey folks will get that one, D...<g>)

Andi, I don't think I've ever laughed so hard, or contemplated ideas and ideals as much as during this interview, and I can truthfully say it's been really fun chatting with you. I made a new friend and fave new author (to add to my growing list). I'd like to thank you for letting me pick at your brain these past few weeks. Also, good luck with your NaNo! Is there anything you'd like to leave us with today?

Andi: D, I'm so bummed this is done! What a total blast I've had! WOW! I'm on your list???? Holy sacred shelves, Batman! That's so cool! Thanks for the NaNo wishes. I'm proud to say I got my 50K words in and now I'm trying to finish this pup out. Another 30K-40K words, I'm thinkin'.

Let's see. Something to leave y'all with. Hmm. Buy my stuff! Oh, wait. That's SO crass! Pimp City over here. Sorry.

To y'all out there, no matter your gigs, live your truth, but not to the exclusion of possibility. And share the love. The world needs a hell of a lot more of that.

Thanks a ton, Deven. You are totally the bomb. Good luck with queergirltalk and your art and your writing and whatever else. And leave your back door open--I'm not really good yet at steering this magic carpet and I don't want to bust anything off its hinges. ;-)

peace!
--a