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Local News

Louisiana romance writers find heart in San Francisco

By Cheré Coen

Several Louisiana romance authors, including one nominated for a national honor, descended on San Francisco last week as part of the national convention of Romance Writers of America.

And despite the current downturn in the economy, everyone from booksellers to editors claim romance is anything but dead. At the convention's annual "Literacy for Life" fundraising book signing, for instance, \$58,000 was raised for Pro Literacy Worldwide by 520 romance authors signing books donated by their publishers.

"It was busy and chaotic as usual but overall I think this was a very positive conference," said Lenora Worth, an inspirational romance author from Shreveport. "The buzz in chatting with others is that in spite of the economy, romance and women's fiction book sales are doing pretty good. The crowd of readers at the 'Literacy for Life' book signing seemed to indicate this trend. I think this was the biggest crowd I've ever seen and most were actually readers, not just others attending the conference."

Other authors from Louisiana who attended the convention and signed copies of their books were Toni McGee Causey of Baton Rouge, author of Bobbie Faye's (kinda, sorta, not exactly) Family Jewels; Sabrina Jeffries, formerly of New Orleans, author of Let Sleeping Rogues Lie; Farrah Rochon of New Orleans, author of Release Me and Sherry Thomas, a graduate of LSU, author of Delicious.

Elaine Grant of Baton Rouge was nominated for RWA's most prestigious award, the RITA, for her Harlequin Superromance Make-believe Mom.

"I didn't make the national conference in '98 when my first book, Roses for Chloe, was also a RITA nominee, so I was even more eager to have the opportunity to go to San Francisco," Grant said. "It's a great honor to be nominated and the nominees get the royal treatment. There's a special ribbon on the nominee's nametag and everywhere you go, people congratulate you and ask about your book."

Grant didn't win the RITA, but loved the experience regardless. In addition to the formal awards ceremony and all that leads up to the event, the convention offered three days of workshops and networking opportunities with agents and editors of major publishing houses. Authors attending were also treated to special dinners and parties hosted by publishers. For Grant, Harlequin treated her and other authors to special events, plus she and other authors from her "line" hosted their own party wearing tiaras and serving chocolate and wine.

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