

BEHIND THE SCENES: AUTHOR'S NOTE ABOUT *DEADLY TIES*

The idea for this story began with a news article about a cold case murder investigation of an unknown female in a rural Arkansas county. Initially logged in as Jane Doe #3 for the year, detectives now refer to her as Bone Woman. What kind of person, I wondered, could commit murder, burn the body, and stack the charred remains neatly beneath a tree? Was the killer a stranger or someone known to the victim—perhaps a family member or close friend? How did they meet, and why did she die? The questions lingered, and I tinkered with the idea of bringing Bone Woman into a novel.

About that same time, I met noted historian and folklorist Phillip W. Steele and was captivated by Ozark tales of buried treasure. As Mr. Steele notes in the introduction of his *Lost Treasure of the Ozarks* “considerable amounts of treasure still may be waiting to be discovered under Ozark soil.”

Anyone wishing to learn more about Ozark legends might enjoy reading Mr. Steele’s *Lost Treasure* publication or his *Ozark Tales and Superstitions*. I would also suggest the work of W. C. Jameson. His book *Buried Treasure of the Ozarks* provided hours of fun and was a source of inspiration for the plot.

As Mr. Steele and I discussed regional folklore, it occurred to me a treasure hunt would be an intriguing backdrop to a murder mystery set in the Ozarks and thus *Deadly Ties* began. Recently, television shows have inspired many to take to the hills and fields in search of treasure, much to the chagrin of landowners. Consequently, I’ve taken creative liberties with locales in this book, inventing, reshaping, or fictionalizing many locations. While Beaver Lake and Eureka Springs are quite real, Barton County and Hogan County exist only in my imagination and within the pages of this series. I’ve done the same with organizations, events, and elected officials throughout the region.

A great many people helped in the research for this novel. The Benton County, Arkansas, Search & Rescue team let me tag along on training runs and answered endless questions, as did kennel owners, veterinarians, dog groomers, and pet owners. Patricia Amason created the dogs’ American Kennel Club registration names. Maureen Kidd generously provided expert information about dog training as well as search and rescue strategies. I used AKC regulations and language for technical details as well as presentation of specific breed names, such as Cocker Spaniel or Labrador Retriever. In addition, I used the textbook *Scent: Training to Track, Search, and Rescue* by Milo Pearsall and Hugo Verbruggen, M.D. and Susan Bulanda’s *Ready! The Training of the Search and Rescue Dog*.

Jerome Rose provided expert information and research support regarding the technical side of death and drowning. Jeff Sprott helped me work out fire patterns and evacuation logistics. Arkansas native and fellow writer Jack Cotner was my guide through the hills of the Ozarks and deep into caves. My thanks to beta readers Barbara Alexander, Maureen Kidd, and Jack Cotner for their keen eyes and excellent suggestions. Thanks also to everyone who helped nurture the cover design and interior layout from concept to creation. I'm grateful to all for their enthusiastic support and encouragement. Any mistakes are mine alone.

And finally, a note of gratitude for a life well lived with my own beloved Alix, found in these pages as Sweet Pea.