

Posted: 03.27.03 @ 2 p.m.

Francis Ray Shares Gifts of Writing, Romance

By **Kandie Delley** | SPECIAL TO SACOBSERVER.COM

DALLAS (NNPA) - As if being a graduate of Texas Woman's University, school nurse practitioner for Dallas Public Schools, mother and wife are not enough, Texas native Francis Ray has also attained recognition in yet another sector of her life.

Brandishing her skills as a part-time writer she has published 15 novels. This Blackboard Best-Selling Author has appeared in "Essence" magazine and has been listed on Black Expressions Book Club ("I Know Who Holds Tomorrow").

She's garnered enough attention to have her novel, "Incognito," made into a BET-TV movie and is recognized for her contribution to the widely acclaim anthologies: "Rosie's Curl & Weave" and "Della's House Of Style."

Her latest heartfelt creation, "The Turning Point," is Ray's first mainstream novel and is guaranteed to deliver the compassion and intensity of her previous stories. "Turning Point" is a story of self-discovery and second chances. Grazing on the sensitive topic of domestic violence, she maneuvers the reader to focus on hope and triumph rather than the obliqueness of destruction.

By interlacing past and present, Ray allows the reader to unite with the pains, hardships, and joys of her characters as they progress into a future. Her ability to weave stories not only heals the past but offers love and security in place of shattered lives.



Author Francis Ray's latest book is "The Turning Point"

Ray's next novel, "Somebody's Knockin' at My Door," will be released in May. Her first book, "Fallen Angel," will be reissued in the fall.

The Dallas Weekly talked to Ray about her work.

DALLAS WEEKLY: How long have you been writing? Is it something you have always wanted to do?

RAY: I've been writing for about 14 years. I never knew I wanted to write until I read several romance books by Katherine Woodiwiss. I loved the strong moral fiber of the characters, as well as their ability to work through tremendous problems and remain faithful. I began thinking about creating my own characters.

DW: When did you actively begin pursuing your writing career? Also what actions did you take to establish yourself? Did these actions include self-publishing?

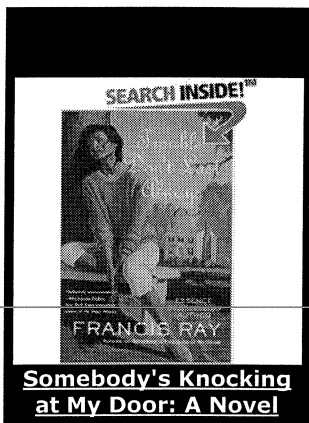
RAY: After deciding I wanted to write my own story, I joined a writer's group called North Texas Romance Writers of America. The members, published and non-published, were a tremendous help in assisting me to grow as a writer. I went to workshops, studied writers' manuals, and joined a critique group.

DW: Several writers today seem to be starting off by self-publishing. Is that something you did or considered?

RAY: I didn't want to self-publish. Many self-published authors tour a great deal, but because of family obligations I wouldn't have been able to do that. Instead, I sent my manuscript to an established publisher and was fortunate enough to be picked up. Each person should do their homework and figure out what works best for them.

DW: When did you get picked up by a major publisher?

RAY: Odyssey Book purchased my first book, "Fallen Angel," Dec. 24, 1991. As you can imagine it made for a wonderful Christmas. In 1994, Kensington Publishers launched a line of African American romances called "Arabesque." My second book, "Forever Yours," co-launched the line. I signed with St. Martin's Press in 2001 and remain with them.



DW: What is it like working in the medical field and still maintaining a writing career? Would you eventually consider becoming a full-time writer?

RAY: Medical information is factual and concise. In fiction, I get to let my imagination run wild. But I also get to do something else that can't be done in the medical profession, make sure my characters have happy, fulfilling lives. My goal is to become a full-time writer within the next couple of years. That depends on contract negotiations. I'm very hopeful about it.

DW: Who are some writers that you admire, and why and where do you feel your style of writing balances or contradicts with theirs?

RAY: I admire J. California Cooper for her wit and realism of family life. Donna Hill is also a favorite for her character depth; Yolanda Joe for her diversity. I don't think my style of writing compares with any of them. They are all unique and wonderful.

DW: What do you feel about the topics and rise of current African American authors?

RAY: I think it's about time and wonderful. Since 2000 there have been 10 new imprints for African American books. The writers are happy and the readers are ecstatic. It's a marvelous time to be a writer.

DW: How did the script for "Incognito" come about? Was this offer something that came to you or something you were seeking?

RAY: I had no idea when I wrote "Incognito" that it would be a BET-TV movie. I was stunned when my editor called with the news. I knew BET had people reading the books looking for projects that would translate into TV movies, but I never imagined them doing one of mine.

DW: Would you be interested in another film project or is one already in the works?

RAY: I think "The Turning Point," my first mainstream, would make a wonderful movie. My agent is shopping it around.

DW: What has been the reaction of your family and has your success altered your family life?

RAY: My family has always been very supportive, since day one. They realize writing is my passion, as well as my second career. I am blessed by their love. My fans have been tremendously supportive and faithful. I appreciate them so very much.

For more information on Francis Ray, visit her site www.francisray.com.

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