



## [WormholeRiders WHR You Decide Radio](#)

### Guest: Deborah Ledford Radio Interview Transcript

Sunday September 08, 2013 – 11 AM Pacific Time

Thank you for having me on your radio show, Kenn and Patricia. The feature article at your WormholeRiders website is fantastic! Thanks so much for helping us spread the word about our [NatAmGoGo project on Indiegogo](#).

1. You're an award-winning author. Could you tell us a bit about this? Quite a few of my short stories have won or placed in various contests, and later go on to appear in print. I've been nominated for 3 Pushcart Prizes for my literary stories, but I'm most honored that book 2 of my series, *SNARE*, became The Hillerman Sky Award Finalist, also a finalist for the New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards.
2. When did you know you wanted to become an author? I started very early on as an artist and a photographer, so I've always lived a creative life. I'm a very visual person, which is why I love movies so much—and why I do my best to place the reader right there in my books, taking them on the journey with my characters. I learned storytelling from my grandfather during the summers growing up in western North Carolina—which is where my novels are primarily set. He was a great storyteller. I learned a lot about him and my family, and his recollection of events by just listening—letting him tell the tales as he replayed them in his mind, while we sat on the front porch, watching cars and trains pass by.
3. Did you have a special mentor whom aided your journey to become a successful author? Not specifically, although I do turn to authors I've become friends with since my books came out. I only knew screenwriters when I first started out—and that's a completely different writing medium. So I relied on reading fiction to help lead the way. This was quite a learning curve because although I tended to write suspense, I almost exclusively read literary fiction. I had a lot of catching up to do when agents or editors would ask which authors my work resembled. Now I know the answer is Lisa Gardner, Karin Slaughter and a bit Gregg Hurwitz, but there are so many writers out there I've yet to read. I'll never catch up.
4. How many books have you written in your career? The first novel I completed may never see the light of day. It would take a lot of revising to make the storyline valid because technology has changed so much, so I may never rewrite that one. I prefer to keep moving forward. The three Steven Hawk/Inola Walela books appear in print and as ebooks, and dozens of my short stories appear in print.
5. How long did "Crescendo" take from beginning to publication? It's difficult to say. I'm constantly coming up with ideas for the next book or shorter piece—especially if I get stuck and need time to process what is to come next. Most writers will tell you they spend more time mentally working on the words as actual time at the keyboard. *STACCATO* was published in 2009, and I had much of book two researched and written by then. *SNARE* was released late 2010, then there was a break until Feb 2013 when my publisher released *CRESCENDO*.



6. Crescendo is the third in a series of novels about Deputy Steven Hawk and Inola Walela. Who are they? Steven Hawk started out as the only African-American deputy of a western North Carolina county. In *CRESCENDO* he's the sheriff. A slew of agents & editors wanted me to change Hawk to a Caucasian. They felt the book would be an easier sell, but I stuck to my initial decision and passed on their suggestions. I believe it's very important to stay true to the characters as they first present themselves. Inola Walela is the only female Native American on a small city police force. As you can imagine, both of these characters are somewhat outsiders, which provides a lot of avenues for confrontations—which is one of the main elements lacking in new writers' work. Confrontation in dialogue and situations is what elevates suspense and intrigue—very important in a thriller novel.
7. What inspired you to write the Deputy Steven Hawk and Inola Walela series? Did you know all 3 at start? I knew Hawk right away. I studied psychology and knew his mindset and how he would interact as a law enforcer quite early in the process. Inola doesn't come on stage until book two and takes the lead in *CRESCENDO*. I probably should have become a cop, and through her I can be—from the safety of my computer. I rely heavily on current and former police officers to make sure I don't veer off the proper path. Some write what they know—and I sometimes do that too, but I primarily write about what I *want* to know, so loads of research goes into each book. Selecting the perfect name sometimes takes days of research. We tend to cherish our newest babies best, so I do love *CRESCENDO*, but *SNARE* is special to my heart. The main story revolves around a Native American rock star in peril. I've always wanted to be a rock star, but too chicken to step on stage—so I created Katina Salvo to make that a reality for me.
8. Are Deputy Steven Hawk and Inola Walela fictional characters based on real life analogs? All of my characters are figments of my imagination. There are some characteristics or ticks I've lifted from real people. I'm like Inola in some ways—I'm quite shy and prefer to watch from the corner of a room. You learn a lot when you stay silent and allow others to speak.
9. Do you plan more novels in the future? What about? **(Patricia)** I'm working on book 4 right now. I love Steven Hawk, but now I'm more drawn to Inola since *CRESCENDO*. She has a lot more to say and work out than Hawk right now. For the next book, Inola takes on the responsibility of trying to clear a childhood friend from the suspicion of killing his wife and young daughter. I'm really excited about this one because I decided to make the villain a woman.
10. How did you meet or become acquainted with acclaimed Canadian actress Christina Cox? **(Patricia)** We've been corresponding since late-June and we met in last month after she read *SNARE* and *CRESCENDO*. I'm very fortunate that producer & writer Nancy Lee Myatt was receptive to receive my request to give Christina the heads up about the audiobook project. Nancy Lee is also Native American and she recognized the importance of the NatAmGoGo benefit enough to open the door to me meeting Christina. And thankfully Christina enjoyed the books enough to say yes. For me, the narrator is every bit important as the words being read, and Christina has a fantastic alto register—the perfect tAmber, and a wide vocal spectrum—and she's also a fantastic actress, so I can't wait to hear what she will come up with---no pressure, Christina! She was my first and only choice to bring my words to life and I couldn't be more thrilled. Christina and Nancy Lee will be launching their Nikki & Nora webseries December 1st, so fans will be able to watch her soon—and listen to her perform *CRESCENDO* when we release the audiobook later that month.



11. Would you agree that many people in life have become trapped by life on a reservation? **(Patricia)** Family and tradition are the most important element for tribal members living on reservations. This is the core of their being, spirituality and belief system. It's not easy because there aren't generally a lot of opportunities for steady work on reservations. Kids go off to college with the dream of returning to pass along on their knowledge, but there aren't enough jobs to fill the need.
12. What is the purpose of the @NatAmGoGo audiobook campaign at Indiegogo campaign? **(Patricia)** The audiobook market is exploding—many people spend hours each day commuting to work, and people are choosing to drive rather than fly, so the ideal way to pass time is to listen to a good book. The first layer of NatAmGoGo is to produce and distribute *CRESCENDO* as a download and to purchase CDs of the recording. But I felt just doing something for me was selfish, and I'm very proud of my heritage and the Native American connections I've made, so I decided wrapping a cause with entertainment would be an ideal way for contributors to feel connected to something they wouldn't ordinarily even think of, let alone have the opportunity to be a part of. It takes a village to launch a benefit campaign and I'd like to give a shout out of appreciation to the entire NatAmGoGo team for all of their hard work. There's 27 days left for the fund raising, but don't wait! We'd love you to help us gain momentum.
13. Are Indian languages threatened with extinction in the United States? **(Patricia)** Most definitely. I sat in on a meeting a couple of months ago and the spokesman stated that one of the tribes he represents has only one remaining elder—after she passes no one will be able to teach the tribal language. There are generations of Native Americans from various tribes who can't speak their native tongue to their elders.

PATRICIA WILL COMMENT ON THE RESERVES IN CANADA.

14. How can our listeners find out more about your audiobook production and Native American benefit? Go to Indiegogo, then search by title: NATAMGOGO – all one word. Then click on the Indian headdress photo and the campaign page will come up. You can contribute any amount you'd like, but there are also great perks to consider —downloadable and print versions of my books, the unabridged recorded CDs of *CRESCENDO*, a very cool limited edition of the audiobook CDs bound in leather with a booklet signed by Christina Cox. Also some fantastic jewelry by Navajo, Hopi and Taos Pueblo artists. Also, everyone who contributes will receive a downloadable version of *STACCATO*, the first book in my series.
15. Your novels are brutally honest about life on a reservation. What can be done to break the cycle? **(Patricia)** The only tribe I'm somewhat fluent to speak about is the Taos Pueblo because I've spent so much time there doing research and visiting my contact, Floyd "Mountain Walking Cane" Gomez and his wife Rima. They often tell me about there not being opportunities on the reservation. Unless you are an artist or a craftsman the options are limited. That's one of the reasons Floyd started the Blue Feather Corporation—to create opportunities for young and old alike to be able to teach and learn the traditional ways on the reservation.
16. On cover art work, each prominently features "hands". What is the symbolism about? **(Patricia)** I discovered the image for the first book at a poster shop a very long time ago when I was working on the screenplay version of *STACCATO*. The picture is of two hands hovering over a piano keyboard, locked in handcuffs. It was such a powerful image that it prompted the entire secondary story, which is about two world-class pianists and their diabolic mentor. My publisher and I decided that hands would be the visual "brand" of my series, so



we continued on with the idea. I had a vision for the *CRESCENDO* cover pretty much since day one of beginning the first pages, of hands cradling a badge wrapped in a mourning band.

17. With an active career as an author and editor, are you pleased with your journey? Yes, absolutely. I've been blessed with so many opportunities. As an editor I've mentored a lot of up-and-coming writers who go on to be published. There's no better feeling when I receive a "My work is going to be published" phone call. And as an author, there is no better job. I have the opportunity to entertain. And most people have never seen the region of the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina featured, so it's fun to be able to take them there.
18. We have heard that there a new series you are working on? Can you tell us about it? Well, I started a new series, but I heard from so many people who have enjoyed the Hawk/Walela series and didn't want to see it end. So now I'm revising my work in progress to make it book 4 of the series. This was a difficult decision because I started out as a screenwriter—where every project is a standalone, without any continuing characters. When I signed with Second Wind Publishing they said they wanted a series, so I told them I could do a trilogy—but that was all I was interested in. But the fans won out—and I couldn't be more happy. I love Inola and Hawk and their supporting cast. I was depressed for days when I finished *CRESCENDO*, believing I would never get to spend time with them again.
19. Why do you think that some authors never seem to share other peoples work or re-tweet? I don't really know. I'm pretty inept about sending Tweets, which is why I usually just ReTweet or Favorite a post. You would probably be surprised by how many authors are shy and reluctant to put themselves out there—preferring their novels to do their talking instead.
20. What advice would you give to authors about being more involved with their followers? Engaging is the best way to interact with your fans. But there can most definitely a downside to this. It's scary to put yourself out there and you never know how far someone will go. I'm by no means famous, but I still receive some pretty strange correspondences. It's good to know when to disengage, and if necessary block and report if messages get too weird.
21. What time management advice would you give to anyone considering working as an author? It's easy to get caught up in the time suck of social media. Unfortunately this is a necessary evil, but you must first remember that you are a writer. If you have to, consider this your job for a certain number of hours every day. Butt in the chair, fingers at the keyboard. Your word count at the end of the day is the most important gauge to keep you on track and prove that you are making progress with your novel, screenplay or story.
22. For a person with a goal of writing and publishing, what are your suggestions for getting started? Read. Especially books in the genre you are writing for. I don't recommend reading the same genre if you are working on a first draft though. It's too easy to slip into someone else's writing voice while you're still figuring out the initial stages of your novel. I recommend writers read debut novels—this is what agents and publishers were currently looking for. I say "were" because it takes a year for a novel to be completed and released, so a trend may be old school by the time the published version reaches the market. Don't write to trends. Be honourable to your characters and storyline.



23. What do you do to get into the “zone” for writing? **Music is very important to motivate and stimulate my mind. I need to be in a near coma to write creatively and prefer to compose late in the night. I guess that’s due to my past working in the theatre and for films. I was a professional scenic artist and master carpenter. Technicians wouldn’t get access to the set or stage until the performers were released. I do my business correspondences and editing in the mornings, then crank up Blue October, Pink, The Killers, Muse, and my all-time favorites, contemporary musical soundtracks. My two Australian Shepherds are constant companions. They’ve gotten used to me talking to myself.**
24. Do you attend book fairs or conventions? Do (would) you enjoy meeting your fans? **(Patricia) Yes, absolutely. I always attend the Left Coast Crime conference, and usually Bouchercon—one of the largest mystery writer & fan conferences. This is pretty much the only time to re-connect with author friends, and to meet fans so we can show our appreciation. I also go to the Tucson Festival of Books, where over 100,000 book lovers and authors get together every March. I love the fans who stop by to pick up my latest release.**
25. How do you spend your down time when you are not pursuing work? **(Patricia) It seems like everything I do is related to crafting words. Down time consists of research, watching TV & films to help me “cast” my characters so I can visualize them while I write, most of all I read. My treat at the end of the day is to enjoy words a printed book.**
26. What would your fans be surprised to learn about you? **(Patricia) I’m nothing like the psychopathic villains I’ve created. Before STACCATO was published I had a friend read the manuscript—she wasn’t a writer but she was an avid mystery reader, so I was interested in her input. Turns out I scared her because the bad guy is way bad. She never quite saw me the same way. I also cuss like a sailor and drink way too much Monster.**
27. What is next for you Deborah? **(Patricia) To do all I can to make the NatAmGoGo campaign at Indiegogo a success. Then head to the recording studio with Christina Cox in November. I’m very excited that we are on track for a late December release of the unabridged audiobook version of CRESCENDO.**