

Author to Author with Mindy Friddle

The Author: Karin Gillespie

The Books: "Bet Your Bottom Dollar" (Simon & Schuster) and "A Dollar Short" (Simon & Schuster)

Karin Gillespie was a special education teacher in Georgia when she got "the call." Her agent phoned to tell her that Simon & Schuster wanted to buy her novel.

"And then my agent said, 'They think your novel should be a series. Do you have an idea for a second book?' I didn't, but I told them, 'no problem!' At that point I was willing to write a pop-up versions of the book if they wanted it!"

The result? The Bottom Girl Series: three comic novels set in the fictional small town of Cayboo Creek, South Carolina.

"I've found that writing a series is easier because you don't have to re-create an entire universe with every book," Gillespie said from her home in Augusta, Georgia. "I just wrote a book not part of the series and it was like cutting the grass with pinking shears when I'd gotten used to a riding lawn mower."

Recurring characters in Gillespie's series of novels include three women friends, Elizabeth, Mavis, and Attalee -- the Bottom Dollar Girls -- logging nine to five at the Bottom Dollar. "Bet Your Bottom Dollar," now out in paperback, was published last summer and has been optioned by James Woods for film.

"A Dollar Short," the second in the "Bottom Dollar Girls" series, was published this month. The scenario: Chiffon Butrell, a small-town girl from Cayboo Creek, S.C, loses her "average guy" husband to a world-famous movie star. *The Boston Globe*, in a review of "A Dollar Short," said, "It takes talent to sustain this level of comic writing for over 300 pages. "Gillespie keeps the ball in the air, spinning madly, until the end."

Although Gillespie considers herself a comic writer, her books are not "literary," she says. Entertainment is what she's after. "My books have been called Southern Lady Lit or Grit Lit. They are meant to be comical and light. I'm

definitely a beach book author and my readers are people who are looking for a little levity and a fast-paced storyline. They aren't likely to win any fiction prizes but my "prize" is when people say they "laughed out loud" or "couldn't put the book down."

No longer a teacher, Gillespie has plenty to keep her busy. Her third novel in the series, "Dollar Daze: Bottom Girls in Love," will be out next year. She is a columnist for the *Augusta Chronicle*, and is often traveling on a book tour. When it comes to promotion, she handles a lot of her own publicity by booking events, setting up interviews with the media and maintaining a blog called, "Diary of a Hype Hag."

"Authors have to be utterly involved with promotion because nobody cares about their book as much as they do," she said. "Doing promotion for your book is like writing a novel. If you do a little every day, suddenly you've made a discernible difference in your sales."

Far from staid, quiet events, Gillespie's book signings are designed to amuse. She brings along costumes, props, and door prizes. "I also sometimes travel with three other Southern authors called the Dixie Divas. I call us Thelma and Louise squared."

Gillespie recommends budding authors join a writing critique group. She still depends on her own group. "We meet every two weeks and read ten pages. The group has saved me from a lot of embarrassment and bad story lines, I can promise you that!"

Mindy Friddle is the author of the novel "The Garden Angel" (St. Martin's Press/Picador.) Visit her website, www.mindyfriddle.com, for more information on writing and publishing.