

# *Southern* THE AUTHOR'S MAGAZINE Writers

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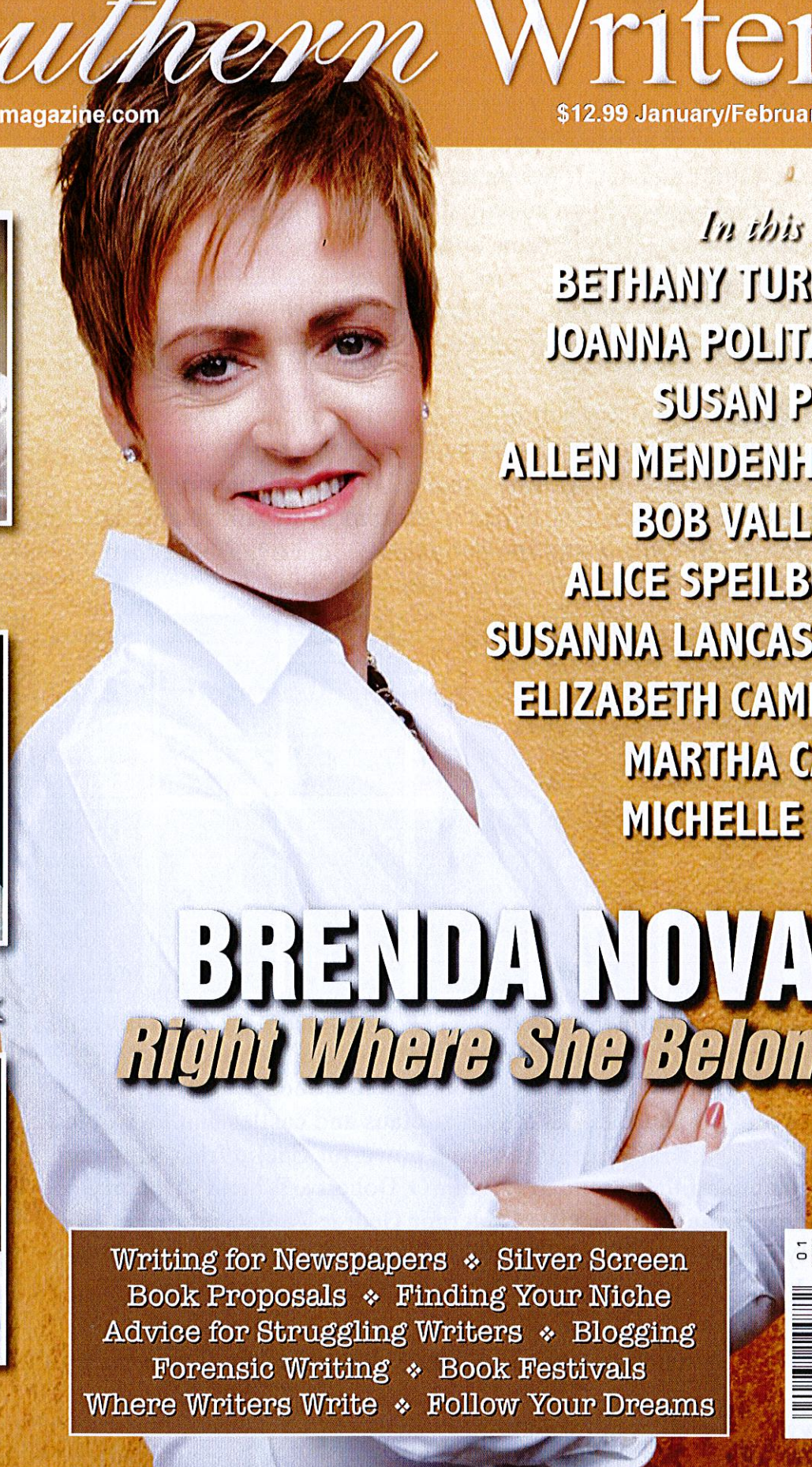
**DAWN RENO  
LANGLEY**



**JANE  
KIRKPATRICK**



**GRACE  
CAVALIERI**



*In this issue*

**BETHANY TURNER**

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## **BRENDA NOVAK** *Right Where She Belongs*

Writing for Newspapers ♦ Silver Screen  
Book Proposals ♦ Finding Your Niche  
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Where Writers Write ♦ Follow Your Dreams



story, which may be because my novels are based on true historical figures. Facing each new scene is the most exciting part of the writing process. Since I write saint stories, 'plotting' for me is the research part. I don't make up the events; I find them in history books, 'dramatize' them, making my novels a definite blend of fact and fiction. Finding the facts can be time-consuming, especially when textbooks give contradictory accounts. Once I sift through the research and get a timeline in place, all I need to do is follow the road map. That's when the fun stuff really begins."

Her newest book, *The King's Prey* (#1 on Amazon for five consecutive weeks), is the dream book Susan always wanted to write. "I first heard of Saint Dymphna, the patron saint of the emotionally disturbed, thirty years ago. Few facts of the seventh-century teenage Irish princess, who fled from her insane father, took three pages in a pamphlet to tell. All that was known about her was her evil, psychopathic dad wanted to marry her, forcing Dymphna to flee with three friends. The king's soldiers pursued them across Ireland, and eventually beyond the sea. I knew there must have been many wild adventures and near-death escapades for Dymphna along the way. My author's imagination recognized the potential this story had for a novel. In order to write her story, I would be forced to fill in the huge gaps with fictional characters and events. *The King's Prey* would be my first stab at 'fiction,' which terrified me. I tried a few chapters, but they were a disaster. I ended up writing *Saint Magnus, the Last Viking* instead. Saint Dymphna continued to haunt me. I couldn't get the idea out of my head. After fifteen years of procrastinating, I knew Saint Dymphna would hound me from Heaven until I wrote it. It was my most difficult novel to write, yet at the same time my most rewarding."

Currently Susan is researching "a novel about Saint Clothilde, the wife of King Clovis, and her grandson, Saint Cloud. And I'm working with a trio of actors to produce three of my novels as Audible books. Saint Ansgar, Saint James the Apostle, and Saint Margaret of Scotland are patiently waiting for me in the wings. I love it when readers give me suggestions. They're the ones I write for in the first place!"

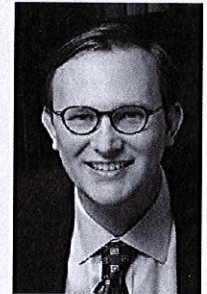
Readers can contact Susan Peek through her website, [www.susanpeekauthor.com](http://www.susanpeekauthor.com). ■

No great man lives in vain.  
The history of the world is but the  
biography of great men.

— Thomas Carlyle

## Tale Spin Of Bees & Boys Allen Mendenhall

Allen Mendenhall is associate dean and executive director of the Blackstone & Burke Center for Law & Liberty at Faulkner University Thomas Goode Jones School of Law and a literary lawyer. His book *Of Bees & Boys* is a collection of essays, where he examines ideas about place, literature, reading, family, and custom from the vanishing perspective of a traditional Southerner. We asked Allen to tell us story behind this book.



"I got lucky. I had no idea I was writing a book. I was just writing and publishing personal essays.

"Then, one day, out of the blue, the publisher of Red Dirt Press emailed me to ask if I'd be willing to publish a collection of my essays as a book. I was excited to learn that someone had been following my work, but I didn't think I'd written enough essays to fill out a book. When I shared my concern about length, she said, 'Just send me what you have and I'll be the judge.'

"So I did. Before long, she wrote back that she would be pleased to publish my essays as a book as long as I was willing to submit them to her editorial process. I was, of course, willing, and after several months of editing and designing, the book came out. I was thrilled.

"The response to the book has been, so far, positive; *Of Bees & Boys* appeals to those who grew up in the South or have lived here for many years. It contains reflections on death, childhood, family, reading, and education. I hope others will enjoy reading the essays as much as I enjoyed writing them."

Whether Allen is lamenting the lack of learning among lawyers, recalling experiences with grandparents, or speculating about the impact of technology on scholarship, his distinctive prose, self-deprecating honesty, and contemplative tone make him one of today's most interesting social critics. Always attentive to the profundities of everyday life, he evokes nostalgic feelings while expressing sometimes pointed, sometimes sensitive opinions that reflect a deep understanding of history, heritage, and the human condition. ■

