



## Getting to know our members! Interview with LuAnn Rod!

*Every month I am interviewing one of our members. Our Montana region is so wide, we don't get many opportunities to get to know one another, so this is my method of getting us introduced. This month I had the privilege of interviewing the writer LuAnn Rod! I hope you enjoy the interview as much as I did!*

---



Can you tell us about yourself as a creator? What kind of art do you create? How did you get to this point?

I write middle grade novels. I was first published in "Jack and Jill" magazine with a story called "The Great Guinea Pig Roundup." That was back the 1980s. I didn't have clue what I was doing and had no contacts in the publishing world to help me get to the next step. I finally met another writer, Barb Heinlen, who now writes as BJ Daniels for Harlequin Intrigue. We both worked at the Bozeman Chronicle and she got me on to a public critique group. That helped me meet others who encouraged me to continue working on my writing. Long story short, after a few decades of writing and sporadically trying to get published, I answered a call for manuscripts from Chicken Scratch Books with a book I had given up on ever having published. That was *Maddie McDowell and the Rodeo Robbery*. It came out in June of 2021. It was a finalist for the 2021 Western Writers of America Spur Award for juvenile fiction, and recently earned a Bronze award from Feathered Quill in the Best of Backlist category for 2024. My next book, *Dog Talk*, is coming out in August, also with Chicken Scratch.

## **What are you hoping to get out of SCBWI?**

SCBWI has already given me a community that is professional as well as educational and encouraging. I have attended local conferences and met writers from around state, listened to editors and agents give advice, and even sent a few queries gaining valuable feedback. Recently our local Hob Nob in Bozeman keeps me engaged with a community of fellow writers. I've also found several online courses offered by SCBWI chapters around the country that have been very educational.

## **What is the most important thing you have learned as a creator so far?**

My first draft of this question included multiple "most important" things. It's so hard to pin it down to one. And I think those most important things you learn change as you grow into your craft. But the one piece of advice I was given early on was, "There's one way to NOT get published: quit." That for me has been the most important thing: keep on writing, keep on learning, keep on growing.

## **What is the thing you struggle with the most in your creative journey?**

My biggest struggle has been, and still is, believing in myself. Rejection is always difficult, and some rejections are more difficult than others. I've quit writing from time to time because of that struggle, but always come back to it. And I've changed my reasons for writing over time. While, like many others, my first impulse was to have a career to make money, now it's to tell my story and hope some good or joy comes from it.

## **Who are the creators you look up to?**

I look up to writers that I know personally—ones who have shared their lives and story with me. I have two good friends, not children's book writers, that I really admire. One is mentioned earlier, Barb Heinlein. After writing more than one hundred titles for Harlequin, she continues to put out several books a year. She is the most prolific writer that I know. She is professional and works her tail off. And she does it because she loves it. My other friend is Milana Marsenich who has been recognized by Western Writers of America, Women Writing the West, and by historical organizations for her first foray into historical nonfiction. She writes historical, nonfiction, and most recently, the first book in a contemporary mystery series. I admire both women's talent, tenacity, work ethic, and their sharing hearts.

## **If you could only read one picture book for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?**

I'm not a picture book reader. And to read only one book of any kind for the rest of my life is the definition of despair. I basically read anything I can get my hands on. My part time job is proofreading for a couple of publishers. One is Open Road Integrated Media and I proof and/or copy edit previously published novels of all sorts that are being added to their digital list. It's been everything from Jules Verne and Charles Dickens to some graphic crime novels from the 1990s. I find something to take from all of them. My other publisher is Barrons, a publisher of study guides for professionals and students. My

most recent projects were for financial advisors taking their professional tests, and on the other end, study guides for AP History students. All those words on pages are infinitely interesting to me.

If you were given an all-expenses-paid trip (including travel, housing, and meals cooked and delivered to your doorstep) to any artist's retreat in the United States—where would you go and what would you do while there? (Let's say, this was a 7-day retreat, you had absolutely no book project deadlines to meet holding you back, and your kids/spouse were going to have as much fun as you do while you're gone—so you'd not be worrying about "other stuff.")

Given my proclivity for getting distracted, it'd really would have to be someplace that didn't have a lot of things to do and places to explore. However, I find inspiration when I'm around horses. It comes from way back as a kid. It's where I'm comfortable, where I can relax and empty my brain. So any place would have to include horses, the big wide open, and a quiet room. I'd envision a morning of riding, an afternoon of writing, and an evening of reading.

Aside from writing or illustrating, what is your next go-to for a creative outlet?

I'm a knitter. Sometimes I have to be careful on when I start a knitting project because I can become so engrossed in it as a creative outlet, that I run dry when writing. I have to pace myself.

Finally, if you could ask just one thing of the next person who is going to be interviewed, what would it be?

I think the creative process is fascinating. So I'd ask: "Where do you get your ideas?"

Where can we find more of your work/ follow you/ get in touch with you?

My books are available through [chickenscratchbooks.com](http://chickenscratchbooks.com), as well as Amazon, and Barnes & Noble. I'd appreciate checking with your local bookstore and public and school libraries and asking them to carry *Maddie McDowell and the Rodeo Robbery* if they don't already. And look for *Dog Talk* coming out in August. I'm not very active on Facebook and Instagram, but I'll be increasing that activity before my next book comes out. My website is [luannmrod.com](http://luannmrod.com).

---

Thank you so much LuAnn for letting me interview you! I hope that you, my dear reader, enjoyed learning about another member of our community! Please reach out to LuAnn to get to know one another and help us build this wonderful region!

Cheers,

Jeanne Bowman  
Montana-IC

SCBWI Montana | 6363 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 425, Los Angeles, CA 90048

[Unsubscribe montana-ra@scbwi.org](mailto:montana-ra@scbwi.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by montana-ra@scbwimontana.ccsend.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!