

Meet Authors Rita Mae Brown and Sneaky Pie Brown

Learn more about their collaboration on the latest Mrs. Murphy mystery, **Puss N' Cahoots**.

By Stacy N. Hackett

Rita Mae Brown with her cat Sneaky Pie. (Photo by Mark Homan)
latest Mrs. Murphy book?

I love horses. I live on a farm with Thoroughbreds. Nobody's written much about Saddlebreds, so I wanted to give readers a glimpse into that world. It is great fun to me to open a door to a new world and see who walks through it.

How did you come up with the scenario for this

What was your inspiration for Harry Haristeen and her pets?
My cat, Sneaky Pie, just told me what to write. Cats have a variety of ways to communicate: the way they move their ears, dilate their pupils, arch their backs or fluff their tails. They have a much broader range of communication than humans. If you can learn the ways cats communicate, it can broaden your view of the world. Sneaky Pie and I have a pretty good working relationship.

What is your writing process?

I get up about 4:30 a.m. in the summer, and about 5:30 a.m. in the winter. I work outside for about two hours and get the chores done. I sit down to work at 7:30 or 8 a.m., and Sneaky Pie follows me into the office. She sits on my desk or lies on the back of my high-backed chair, partially on my neck. We're very close. I'm good creatively for about four hours, and then I'm done. So I head back outside. Physical work helps my mind a lot.

What has the feedback been on the book so far?

Cat people are wonderful, as are all animal people. People have been enthusiastic and interested in the book. The Kentucky people in particular are thrilled, as the action in the book takes place right there. It's been a joy to meet people who love the books.

Were certain parts of the book more difficult to write than others? Which ones?

No, not at all. You have days when you're not feeling well and you don't necessarily want to write, but I love writing and I can't wait to do it everyday. The mysteries in particular are a joy to write.

Which is your favorite book in the Mrs. Murphy series? Why?

My favorite is always the one we're currently working on. You have to love what you're writing about.

What other pets do you live with besides Sneaky Pie?

I have 10 cats and eight rescued dogs. There are 40 horses on the farm, and my tiny herd of cattle. I have one Saddlebred that's a foxhunter. I also have 70 foxhounds; the hunt club's kennel is on our land. In America, we don't kill foxes — we just chase them.

What can we expect next from Harry Haristeen and Mrs. Murphy?

The next book takes place at Thomas Jefferson's summer home, Poplar Forest. The retreat is going through restoration, in the book as it is in real life. This process takes a long time. Historical buildings are works of art — they belong to all the people. We have to be quite careful when restoring such places. I won't reveal the mystery in the next book. I never reveal the mystery ahead of time.

Rita Mae Brown and Sneaky Pie Brown have collaborated on 15 Mrs. Murphy mysteries, including:

Sour Puss (2006)			
Cat's Eyewitness (2006)	Whisker of Evil (2004)	The Tail of the Tip-Off (2003)	Catch as Cat Can (2002)
Claws and Effect (2001)	Pawing Through the Past (2000)	Cat on the Scent (1999)	Murder on the Prowl (1998)
Murder, She Meowed (1996)	Pay Dirt (1995)	Murder at Monticello (1994)	Rest in Pieces (1992)
Wish You Were Here (1990)			

Rita Mae Brown is also the author of the "Sister" Jan Foxhunting mysteries and many novels.

Stacy N. Hackett is a contributing web editor for CatChannel.com and the former editor of Pet Product News magazine. She lives in Southern California with her husband, James, children, Kayla and Parker, and two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Evita and Carson.



In June 2007's CAT FANCY:
Get this month's cat book club discussion questions for Puss N' Cahoots.