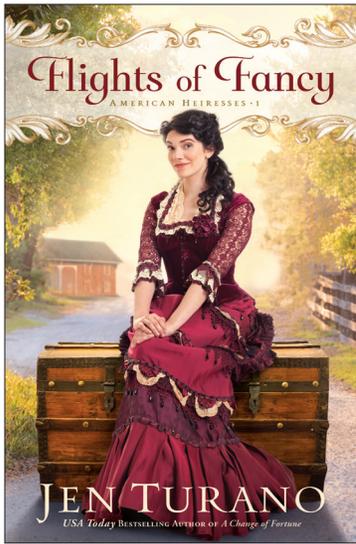




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JEN TURANO



Flights of Fancy
AMERICAN HEIRESSSES #1
by Jen Turano
Trade Paper ISBN: 978-0-7642-3167-4
\$15.99; 368 pp.
Ebook ISBN: 978-1-4934-1733-9
Release Date: January 2019

1. How did you come up with the premise for the AMERICAN HEIRESSSES series?

I've always been bothered by the story of Alva Vanderbilt Belmont and her daughter, Consuelo. Alva had great expectations for her daughter—so great that she decided nothing less than a titled gentleman would do for Consuelo, no matter that her daughter did not want to marry the gentleman Alva set her sights on, the Duke of Marlborough. The duke and Consuelo were not well suited, but Alva insisted her daughter marry the man, and Consuelo, being a dutiful daughter, agreed, although in protest. It was not a happy marriage. That got me wondering what would have happened if Consuelo had balked at her mother's plans, which then had me wondering how she could have gone about that. Her mother was a force of nature, stubborn and determined, so I decided the only way Consuelo would have been able to escape her mother's plans would be for her to run away. Thus the idea for the AMERICAN HEIRESSSES series was born—a series where heiresses did the unexpected to find the lives they were truly meant to live.

2. Flights of Fancy is set in and around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a departure from your other novels. Was there a reason you chose Pittsburgh?

My grandfather was raised in Pittsburgh and practiced law there. He, unfortunately, died when my mother was only four. My grandmother remarried and then relocated to Ohio, but my mom always had a fondness for Pittsburgh and took me there often to visit. The history of Pittsburgh is filled with stories of industrious men who made their fortunes in the steel industry, so when I needed to find the most unlikely place for Isadora to flee to, the city of my grandfather was the first to spring to mind.

3. Did you experience any writer's block while writing Flights of Fancy, and if so, how did you solve that problem?

Over the years, I've come to realize that I don't actually experience writer's block. What I experience is more along the lines of "you've gone completely off the rails and your story is horrible." It's frustrating, but when I feel as if I'm trying to write through mud and the story just isn't moving forward, I now just delete the chapter I'm working on and start again. Works like a charm.

4. Did you uncover any interesting historical tidbits while doing research for this book?

The most interesting tidbit I uncovered was how orphanages were used in Pittsburgh during the last part of the nineteenth century. I'd been intending on using an orphan train when I first thought about including some children in the plot, but then I ran across this book that explained how many people in that area who needed childcare due to the death of a spouse or because of long working hours used the orphanages in what we'd considered today as daycare. Granted, the children didn't come home at night; they stayed at the orphanages for a fee and were able to see their parents over the weekend. This allowed parents to guarantee that their children could stay together as well as make certain their basic needs were met. Then, once those children got older, many of them returned home to live with their parents. Problems did arise if funds were scarce because the orphanages wouldn't promise that the children wouldn't be adopted out or separated, which usually resulted in the parent retrieving the children and leaving them on their own for long stretches of time while the parent worked. It was hardly an ideal situation but one that couldn't always be helped.

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