

Behind the scenes with Wreath

A chat with author Judy Christie



“Wreath” is about 16-year-old Wreath Willis who is finishing high school by day and lives alone in a junkyard at night. Wreath’s mother has just died, and Wreath is determined to pursue a better life, no matter how hard the journey. Unexpected people pop up to help, including Law, the cute boy at the state park; Julia, her disillusioned teacher; and Faye, the boss who relies on Wreath’s creativity to turn a dying business around.

(282 pages. Barbour Publishing. Fall 2011)

Q: Tell us where the name Wreath came from for the main character in the story. Who would you cast to play her in a movie?

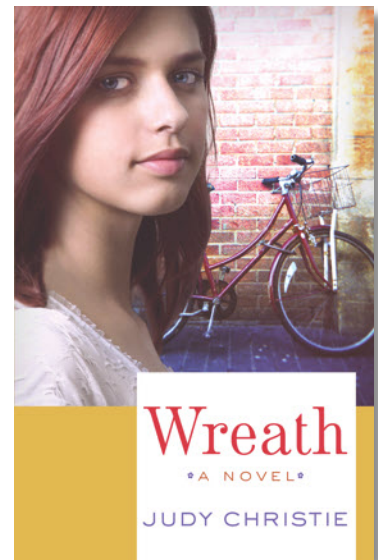
A: As a writer, I’m always jotting things down and pondering how they might fit in a book. The name was that of the great-aunt of a dear friend who died before the book was ever written. I’ve never heard of anyone else with that name and hope it’ll become a favorite girl’s name! My 13-year-old niece Melanie, to whom “Wreath” is dedicated, thinks Emma Watson (Hermione in “Harry Potter” movies) should play Wreath.

Q: What is one of your favorite scenes in Wreath? Describe it for us.

A: Wreath has a bad case of the flu and holes up in the junkyard van where she lives. Feverish, she hears a noise outside and thinks it’s the bad guy, Big Fun, coming to get her. But when she looks outside, it’s something else altogether! Also, I love the prom scene where Wreath is over at the home of Faye, her boss, waiting for her date to arrive.

Q: What do you want your readers to take away from your book?

A: We each seem to take different things from stories — and I believe books speak to us in different ways at particular moments in our life. I definitely



want readers to believe in their own strength and have the courage to pursue their dreams. I hope Wreath's life will inspire readers to finish high school and go to college. Today's world can be discouraging at times, and it's hard to be a teenager. Wonderful things can happen if you are open to possibilities and keep trying.

Q: Are you working on another YA novel? Series?

A: Not exactly ... I'm jotting down notes for another YA novel, but I'm finishing up my Green Series of novels right now — books about a big-city journalist who winds up running a small newspaper in Green, Louisiana. This series also includes strong teen characters, including Katy and Molly. "Rally 'Round Green," book 4, came out in August, and "Downtown Green" will be out next spring.

Q: From your website, I see that you write Hurry Less, Worry Less fiction. Tell us about how you came up with that tagline.

A: I like to help busy people slow down and enjoy each day more. I hope my stories draw readers to communities where people look out for one another and aren't quite so harried. I want readers to relax and recharge as they dive into a novel. I also write the "Hurry Less Worry Less" nonfiction series, including the brand-new "Hurry Less Worry Less for Moms."

Q: How much research did you do for this novel? Did you spend the night in a junkyard?

A: Writing "Wreath" required quite a few jaunts but I drew the line at camping in a junkyard! (Wreath is braver than I am.) A rural junkyard helped give me the idea for "Wreath," and I drove by it dozens of times, including at night, and tried to think what it would be like to be alone in there. I went to a variety of rest-area bathrooms to see how the stall doors open — to set up a scene where Wreath runs from Big Fun. In addition, I looked at photographs taken in the woods at night on my brother's game camera.

Q: For fun, if you could pick anywhere in the world to hang out for a day, where would it be?

A: At a flea market in Ireland with my husband, who is an eighth-grade teacher. We love to travel, and Ireland and Iceland are high on our list of places to visit.



If you'd like to know more about Judy and her books, go to her website at www.judychristie.com. Keep in touch with the latest about Judy by going to www.twitter.com/judypchristie or www.facebook.com/judychristie.

To ask Judy to speak at your church or school or to chat about Wreath, email her at judy@judychristie.com.

To watch a YouTube video trailer about Wreath, please visit this Web page: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5VCZy8Nkx0>



A few little-known facts about the author

- She was the Louisiana state-champion typist in high school.
- She's kept a journal since she was nine years old and still has all of them.
- She loves flea markets and junk shops and has been known to pick up treasures out of the trash on the street.
- She's run two marathons — 26.2 miles each. One was through Disney World and one was in Anchorage, Alaska, on the longest day of the year.
- She was the editor of her elementary school newspaper – the first of many journalism jobs. She had lunch at the White House with First Lady Nancy Reagan; met Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon; has ridden in a hot-air balloon, one of her all-time favorite assignments; and has been photographed with an Elvis impersonator.
- She was once chased by a monkey across the street from her house and has gotten a black eye playing putt-putt golf.



October 16-22 is Teen Reading Week at your local library. Check it out! <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/trw/trw2011/home.cfm>

Judy Christie will be celebrating reading at the Southern Festival of Books in Nashville, Tennessee, on October 15 and with the St. Francisville Public Library in South Louisiana on October 19. She'll do a reading and signing at Barnes & Noble in Shreveport, Louisiana, on October 22, with refreshments, door prizes and a book fair to raise money for books for students like Wreath. See you there!