

An author finds inspiration in familiar terrain

BY JACQUELYN MITCHARD

When is a series not a series? The easy answer is . . . when I write it. But the real answer is more complicated. Now, they say that a sequel for a writer is the last refuge of a scoundrel. But it's not a sequel when the primary character is—well, when she has to share the stage.

Far more accomplished writers than I (Louise Erdrich and William Faulkner, to whom I'm not comparing myself) have written books that didn't so much continue the history of one or two people but dipped into a familiar universe for the next story. That's what I've done with my new novel, *No Time to Wave Goodbye*.

It does, in fact, take up where my first novel, *The Deep End of the Ocean*, left off, 13 years ago. But it begins a series of new events, not a new take on old ones.

What I learned from *No Time to Wave Goodbye*, other than that I could do this with dignity, was that I had the time of my life. I didn't realize how vital these ancient characters still were. I didn't recognize the places they inhabit in my writer's heart.

And so, perhaps not so surprisingly, I'm back in that universe for the novel I'm currently writing, to be published in 2010. There'll be new people with new stories and old faces turned toward new complexities. Turns out, I have a crush on my own Yokapanowtha County—Chicago's Italian neighborhood at Taylor and Racine Streets and the exurbs beyond.

In fact, *The Deep End of the Ocean* started with a crush. I thought it was a crush on a boy. Back when I was a young widow with four young kids, pushing 40 and ever so alone, I began to dream at night of my high-school sweetheart, taking refuge in the endless summer nights we shared, lying on a quilt on the hood of his grandpa's Bonneville, smoking and stroking skin that would never be so soft again.

My honey and I were plumbers' children, but still privileged. While we had to work, it was only after school. Before our dates, we girls dropped by the cologne counter at Marshall Fields—as one of my pals put it, “renting to own” our cosmetics. Four guys once serenaded me under the window of our apartment, singing “Jackie” instead of “My Girl” in the refrain.

Yet, there were stains on that place and time, just as there were for Francie Nolan in *A*

Tree Grows in Brooklyn. A mile from our apartment, a friend parked his car on the railroad tracks until an eastbound train dragged him and his 15-year-old girlfriend away. She was already dead, from an overdose. Mr. Curry beat his wife so badly he put out her eye and didn't go to jail. Our great-uncle raped my first cousin.

What I felt wasn't really a crush on a boy, but on the past—particularly the sweet and profane world in which I grew up. When I wrote *Deep End*, I keened my own grief through the grief of another mother, Beth Cappadora. My children's blunt suffering became the blunt suffering of Vincent Cappadora about his little brother's kidnapping.

The book was a hit and a triumph.

I put away my west-side Chicago youth.

Or so I thought.

Last year, I had another book ready to go—one day to be published. But I found myself writing (around the edges) about the Cappadoras. Finally, it was clear I had the answer to the question that so many readers had asked me since the publication of my first novel: what ever happened to Vincent and the rest of the Cappadoras?

Back to the beginning I went with a purpose. I rewrote and followed the strands. The book bloomed into *No Time to Wave Goodbye*. Not everyone who read it will have read *The Deep End of the Ocean*. That's not necessary. This new story didn't come from the previous story.

It came from that great interlaced weave of lace and chain link that is my place, my locative past. And as soon as I finished it, I wanted to go there again, because the further we get from the life we once lived, the clearer the details. Why keep that universe under lock and key?

Of course I hope readers like revisiting people whom they once considered beloved, as I did. But more than that, I turn to those streets and those nights to find myself. I walk down a block of two flats, and a dog barks. A passing car trails the ribbon of a Frankie Valli song under the viaduct. Under the light in a kitchen window, a girl opens her books. Her hair is mayonnaised with Dippity-Do and wound on rollers the size of a car's tail pipes.

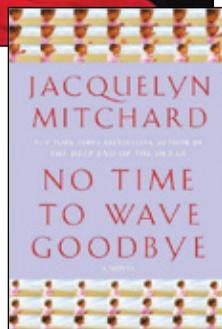
I know her. I am her. ♡

Jacquelyn Mitchard has written many books for adults and children since her first novel, *The Deep End of the Ocean*, was published in 1996. Her latest, *No Time to Wave Goodbye* (Random House, \$25, 240 pages, ISBN 9781400067749), will be released on September 15.



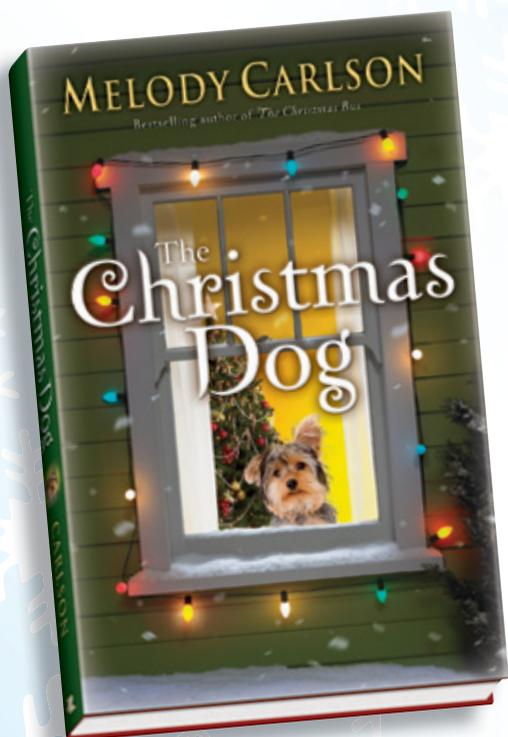
JACQUELYN MITCHARD

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MILITARY HISTORY

Saving Europe's greatest treasures

BY HOWARD SHIRLEY

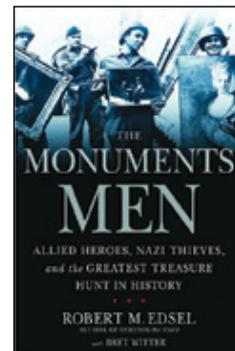
From 1939 through the last months of the war, the Nazi army seized priceless paintings, sculptures, tapestries and more, from museums, palaces, cathedrals, private homes, even tiny chapels—the Nazis plundered everything, carting off the cultural history of every nation they entered.

But just as the Allied Forces fought to save the Western world, others fought to save Western Civilization. They were “the Monuments Men,” a handful of soldiers given a unique assignment: to preserve the cultural soul of Europe by protecting Europe's art. Robert M. Edsel's masterful book *The Monuments Men* shares their story, in a tale that is part history, part war story and part treasure hunt. Undermanned, undersupplied and with virtually no authority, the Monuments Men (and women) faced bullets, bombs and Nazi booby traps to rescue works by Rembrandt, Da Vinci, Vermeer, Michelangelo and more.

Edsel and his co-author, Bret Witter, have crafted an account that moves like a Hollywood action adventure, with scenes ranging from a peasant's cottage in the middle of an artillery battle, to the depths of an ancient salt mine. There are heroes to root for, villains to hiss at and an increasingly pressing race against time as the Nazis, in a last vicious act of defiance, set about to destroy the art rather than give it up.

Edsel and Witter interviewed the few surviving Monuments Men, examined family letters and even Nazi archives in their research. Whether you're a fan of art, military history or stories of real-life heroes, *The Monuments Men* is a treasure worth the hunt. ♡

Howard Shirley is a writer in Franklin, Tennessee.



The Monuments Men

By Robert M. Edsel
with Bret Witter

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