



Jean Hoover Writes With Two Pens

Words & Design by Kaili Cochran

Jean Hoover is a 77-year-old self-published author who writes fiction, nonfiction and runs her own publishing company.

Hoover moved to Jacksonville in 1960, when she was 12 years old. She grew up, left for Europe, came back, moved to L.A., came back again.

Today, she still lives in Jacksonville, only now, she's helping others discover it, through fiction, memoir, and her most recently published: a local guidebook that proves this city is more than what meets the eye

"You don't really know Jacksonville until you sit down and start looking," Hoover said. "Jacksonville Unplugged isn't just for tourists. It's for the people who live here, too."

As a child, Hoover was aspiring to be a nurse. But her ninth grade creative writing class was a turning point in her early career.

Bullied throughout school for having invisible friends, she turned inward and continued writing stories and building imaginary worlds as an outlet for her determination.

"You learn to live with your past, but not live in it," Hoover said.

The same year, her teacher required the class to write an outline before writing their stories. Hoover couldn't do it, not with the way that she writes, nothing is scripted in advance.

"I was like that doesn't make any sense. By the time I get finished with the outline, my story will have changed because I make things up as I write," Hoover said.

When she turned in the outline and her finished story together she explained to her teacher that she had to write the story before she could write the outline. In response, her teacher said she didn't need this class at all.

"She told my dad, 'She's going to be an author'," Hoover continued writing and went on to publish her first book in 2000 under the pen name Jennifer Ferranno and has been building her reputation ever since.

When it comes to the craft of her fictional stories, most derived from the question of "What If?"

"What if you were someone like Elon Musk and you just wanted to disappear? That's how Harlow's Castle started and that's how Teddy started," Hoover said.

She's proven she doesn't write from outlines. Harlow's Castle went through multiple title and character changes, three times over. She even points out that the whole storyline was rewritten about three or four times.

As a rule, her fiction always includes happy endings, no helpless female leads and emotionally mature men.

"I don't do helpless females and I don't write domineering men. I write about strong women and strong men who complement each other," Hoover said.

Hoover also avoids sequels. Each story stands alone, which sometimes makes them longer but they are always complete.

"The end of the book is the end of the book," Hoover said.

While she writes nonfiction under Jean Hoover, her fiction is under Jennifer Ferrano, a pen name that publishes romance and thriller books.

She admits nonfiction is harder to write, not emotionally but structurally.

"Nonfiction to me is a lot harder because I can't make it up," Hoover said. "For fiction, if I don't know what's going to happen in the next chapter, I'll just sit and stare at what I've written until something comes to mind."

Although it seems more challenging to write,

she's able to publish nonfiction at a faster rate than her fiction novels.

"The weird part is I've done four nonfiction books in a year and six fiction books in the last 25 years,"

Hoover self-publishes everything through her own press, Hoover-Ferrano. When she first started, the cost to publish a book through hybrid publishers was \$99.

"\$99 and I could hold the book in my hands," Hoover said. "I was new and I thought I would get to hold my own book. So I did."

Not everyone agreed with the value.

"I had my boss telling me that I'd wasted my money and my dad telling me it would never work and then there's me pulling out the book going 'Look at this,'" Hoover said.

But publishers wanted creative control and editors asked for unnecessary changes.

"If blondes are in season then your female character

suddenly becomes blonde when she was redheaded and they [publishers] expect you to make those changes." Hoover said.

Now, after figuring out a system for herself, Hoover gives advice to aspiring authors in Facebook groups to help them avoid the mistakes she made early on.

She also embraces new tools, using ChatGPT to format her late father's handwritten poetry and generate layout drafts for structure.

"I uploaded pictures of his poems and before I could blink, it had put it in Times New Roman, 12 point font," Hoover said. "All I had to do was copy it over and make sure there were no errors."

Hoover is currently working on Teddy, a similar story to her first novel Dakota Pass but set in Texas. When she's not writing, she's reading. Preferably thrillers by Brad Thor, JD Robb or David Baldacci.

