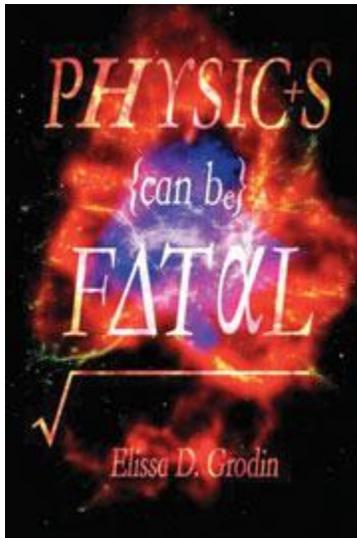


Children's author and KC native publishes first novel for adults



WRITTEN BY MARCIA MONTGOMERY, COMMUNITY EDITOR

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31 2012 14:52



“Physics Can Be Fatal,” by Elissa D. Grodin, Cozy Cat Press, available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com in paperback, Kindle and Nook

Meet Edwina Goodman, a young university physics professor, and Detective Will Tenney as they solve the death of esteemed visiting physics professor Alan Sidebottom in “Physics Can Be Fatal,” by Elissa D. Grodin.

This is Grodin’s first adult novel, after having written several children’s books, and the book is getting good reviews on Amazon.

“I always wanted to be a novelist, but for mysterious reasons I don’t really understand, I did not find a voice for [adult] fiction until very recently,” Grodin said in a telephone interview from her home in Connecticut.

Grodin said Edwina Goodman is her alter ego (notice they even have the same initials). She chose a university physics department as the setting of her novel because “it’s different ... I wanted to try to do something a little bit original.”

“As a girl, I wanted to be an astronomer, but I really stink at math because my brain just won’t go that way,” she said. “I’m kind of a physics buff. I love cosmology and physics and astronomy; it gets me very excited. So if I couldn’t be one myself, I was going to create a character who was smart enough to do it.”

The daughter of Stan Durwood, founder of AMC Entertainment, Grodin grew up in Prairie Village. While not observant Jews, she said her family observed holidays with their cousins, who belonged to The Temple, Congregation B’nai Jehudah. Passover seders were a highlight of her childhood, she said.

“We had our seders at Oakwood Country Club; that’s a great memory.”

Grodin said it was fun being Durwood’s daughter. She and her five siblings got to see lots of free movies, including screenings of movies not yet released.

“The most striking thing about him was his life drive. He was just the most driven and full of life guy I think I’ve ever met in my life,” Grodin said. “That was exciting because it’s contagious. It’s exciting to be around someone who has such a strong life drive.”

Writing children’s books came about serendipitously, Grodin said. She had written a manuscript of poetry for children, which she also illustrated, and a publisher saw the manuscript.

“They didn’t ask me to publish it, but they asked me to do some books for them and that’s how the children’s books

came about,” she said. “I was very, very happy to do those ... but adult fiction is what I’ve always wanted to do, so I’m really grateful that it finally came out of me.”

Photo by Susan Morrow: Elissa D. Grodin

For her first adult novel, she chose mystery because she loves the genre and believes it is underrated.

“My mother was a huge mystery buff and so I think it has something to do with that. It’s a way of being attached to her,” Grodin said. (Her mother passed away two-and-a-half years ago.) “She introduced me to Agatha Christie when I was a teenager. [And] somebody like Wilkie Collins, it doesn’t get any better than that. He and Agatha Christie are sort of at the top of the mountain for me. But I love a good story and that’s really the reason.”



The Durwood household was full of storytelling. Grodin said either her parents were reading to their children or they were going to movies.

“So there were just stories, stories, stories. There has to be a really good page-turningly good story and that’s what I love [about mysteries],” she said. “In college I was a kind of pseudo-serious literature student, but as I’ve gotten older I’ve come to value a great story over something that’s just very highly literate. I hope that’s not sacrilegious.

“If it’s good, you will learn something about human nature and that is the ultimate; that is the point of all art, to learn something about human nature. Because the more you learn about that, the more tolerant you become and the better world it would be.”

Grodin says she tries to incorporate the Jewish idea of tikkun olam (repairing the world) into her writing.

“If everybody did their thing with a view to improving their little corner of the world, how great would that be? So I try to do that with my work,” she said. “I don’t like gory, graphic forensic stuff because I just find it gratuitously violent. A good mystery can be uplifting, you just feel good somehow. It’s my little tiny microscopic way of doing good.”

In addition to loving physics, Grodin said she also is fascinated with academic life, which comes from teaching at University College London and working as a research assistant at Dartmouth College. She said academics is “so pure. It’s kind of like the ideas or the commodity gets them excited and I like that quality in people.”

Doing project research for professors was like solving a mystery, Grodin said. “It was so much fun. So, I guess I was a detective from way back.”

Grodin said she plans to make “Physics Can Be Fatal” the first in a series of books with Edwina and Will. “I’m working on the second one ... and for this one I’m going to bring in all my movie background. The working title is ‘Murder at the Film Society.’”

Grodin is married to Charles Grodin, actor/writer/CBS radio news commentator. They met when she interviewed him for American Film Magazine. She said at the end of the interview, he asked her to marry him. “It must have been beshert,” she said, because they’ve been married for 29 years. They have one son, Nicholas, 25, and live in Connecticut and New York City.