

MIZZOU

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Alumni Profile

Mystery and marriage

A romantic suspense novel isn't something you'd expect from an author who began her writing career in poetry and greeting cards. But if you pick up *No Easy Way* (Vanilla Heart Publishing, 2010), that's precisely what you'll get.

Susan Claridge, BS '92, of St. Louis, first flexed her literary muscle as a child. Writing poetry was therapeutic after her grandmother died, but then the practice of the pen gave way to the thrill of the stage in college. After graduating and starting a family, Claridge realized writing was a more satisfying creative outlet than the never-ending demands on a wife and mother's time.

Claridge wanted to share what she learned about marriage after discovering a few life truths in her then 13-year marriage with husband Cash, BS BA '91. With professional experience composing greeting cards, she started to write. She deemed the resulting book boring and promptly put it on the shelf. But then she had a novel idea: turn her book into a piece of fiction. Five years later, what began as a work of nonfiction became *No Easy Way*, a murder mystery with MU references — such



Under the pen name S.R. Claridge, Susan Claridge writes mystery and suspense novels that contain references to MU. Photo by Nicholas Benner

as the Columns and Shakespeare's Pizza.




"This book has the underlying messages of faith and forgiveness I wanted to tell from the beginning," Claridge says. "That really sets it apart from the rest of the genre. It gives people the thrill of a murder mystery — and something to feel good about."

She's also been writing a mystery series featuring a J-School graduate with ties to a Chicago mafia family. The first two books, *Tetterbaum's Truth* (Vanilla Heart Publishing, 2011) and *Traitors Among Us* (Vanilla Heart Publishing, 2011), are available on amazon.com.

All of Claridge's books go through her five personal readers before being edited by her publisher. One of those readers is her husband, who gets to read along as she writes.

"It's great to get immediate feedback, especially when the book [*No Easy Way*] is about marriage," Claridge says. "I'm writing from experience, and it is, after all, his marriage, too."
— *David Earl*

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