

Author Interview with Mickey Brent



Q & A with author Mickey Brent and Susan J. Farese of SJF Communications

SJF: In a nutshell, tell us about your book or written piece.

MB: These are descriptions of my first two novels:

Underwater Vibes, published in 2017 by Bold Strokes Books:

Hélène Dupont, a French-speaking scientific translator in Brussels, Belgium, cherishes two things: flowers and Chaussette, her cat. Hélène writes bad poetry to help her survive her painful existence with Marc, her husband, until she collapses at work and her doctor proposes a radical lifestyle change. She diets drastically and attempts sports for the first time, while Marc laughs at her efforts. Then Hélène meets Sylvie Routard, a carefree young amateur photographer from Greece. By chance, Sylvie becomes Hélène's private swim coach. During their daily lessons, Hélène's admiration towards Sylvie turns to

attraction. As unsettling feelings hijack her mind and body, daydreams featuring Sylvie enter her life — even her poems. H el ene starts to question her relationship with Marc, and everything else in life.

Broad Awakening, published in 2018 by Bold Strokes Books:

Broad Awakening is the humoristic sequel to *Underwater Vibes*. After kissing at the Belgian coast during a romantic sunset swim, H el ene and Sylvie find ruts in their road to eternal bliss. Major guilt hits H el ene, who struggles to avoid Sylvie, her sexy Greek swimming coach, shunning her deepest emotions to save her 20-year marriage to her abusive husband. Inner turmoil makes H el ene react in bizarre ways. But is it too late to turn back? An intimate dinner turns sour and Sylvie wonders why she keeps falling for women who are wrong for her. When Sylvie heads to the airport with a mysterious, gorgeous woman, and a psychic reveals unexpected news, H el ene must face up to her feelings or risk losing Sylvie forever. When disaster strikes, both women must decide how important being true to yourself, and to love, really is.

SJF: What has your experience been as a writer in San Diego?

MB: So far, it's been a great experience. I'm a member of the Romance Writers of America San Diego chapter and we have a really great group of writers. Most of us write daily and we are publishing novels and stories on a regular basis. It's a professional group, we have great guest speakers, and we sure have fun when we get together at our monthly meetings. I also taught a few courses for San Diego Writers, Ink and that was a great experience. It's a serious, well-run organization that helps motivate writers to keep on writing, polish their craft, and publish their creative work.

Now that I live in sunny San Diego, I love to sit on my living room sofa with a big mug of tea, my cat, my pen, and my notebook. Surrounded by soft pillows, I contemplate the scenery outside — palm trees, a lush potato tree with its purple flowers, my statue of Buddha — wondering what's going to fill my notebook each day. I use an aromatherapy diffuser, so there's lemongrass, lavender, or some other calming, purifying scent in the room.

I keep the large windows open to let in fresh air; their frames are lined with shells and stones from the local beach, colorful candles, postcards, and photos of loved ones. This is also my favorite place to read. I must admit, however, in the evenings I read lying down because I'm exhausted after getting up at dawn to write.

When it's time to work on my stories with a computer, I move upstairs into the bedroom, where my desk overlooks the palm trees — and a parking lot. One day, I'd like to look out at the ocean instead of the parking lot. But for now, I'm content with where I am. San Diego is a great place to live if you're a writer.

SJF: How has storytelling influenced your life?

MB: Storytelling has influenced my life in many impactful ways. The more I write, the more I spin stories, the more I learn about myself and others. It's a way to deepen my view of life in all its glory. I have always had a passion for writing, even as a child. And

when I started writing novels in addition to short stories, I realized that writing is a spectacular way to discover the world and how people see the world from their own unique perspectives. Storytelling also teaches me who I am and where I'm headed as a person. It unearths hidden passions, secrets, and, in my case, an imagination that seems to know no limits. I often get asked if I've experienced the things my characters go through in my stories. It's a valid question. Some authors experience nearly everything they write about, even in fiction. But most of what I write comes from some other place — some hidden source from within. My stories just keep bubbling up, so I grab a pen and scribble them down before they have a chance to disappear.

SJF: If you had a magic wand, what kind of opportunities would be available to writers in San Diego?

MB: If I had a magic wand, I'd create a huge space where all kinds of writers could come and write for free every day. It would be an amazing space with a beautiful view of the ocean, surrounded by palm trees. Writers could spend their days writing, editing, taking writing classes together and not having to work at a mind-numbing day job. They'd just write, maybe sip a margarita or two, mingle with agents and publishers, and they'd all become successful, published authors. And since I'd have a magic wand, why not invite a few famous Hollywood directors or producers to join us?

SJF: What are you excited about when it comes to participating in the inaugural San Diego Writers Festival?

MB: I'm excited about participating in this festival for several reasons. First, it offers a great opportunity for writers and readers in the San Diego community to meet each other and learn about what we're all writing about. Next, I'll be participating as the moderator for the panel "LGBTQ Authors Speak – Voice, Representation and What Happens Next?" Our interactive panel of LGBTQ published authors will discuss issues that writers face with regard to the authentic representation of LGBTQ characters in contemporary fiction.

I proposed this panel because I believe it's extremely important to represent all types of diverse identities in contemporary fiction. We've got some great LGBTQ panelists and I'm excited to hear what they have to say about current challenges in writing, publishing and readership for LGBTQ authors. I'll also be with some fellow BSB authors at our Bold Strokes Books booth to sign books and meet other authors and readers at the festival who want to learn more about our LGBTQ books.

SJF: What advice would you give to a new writer in San Diego?

MB: Here's my advice to new writers in San Diego: If you have a dream to become a published writer, you must believe in yourself. Write something every day, even if it's just in your journal. That's still writing. Take some writing classes or get a writing coach. Go to author readings. Visit libraries. Especially don't give up on your projects or ideas, even when things look bleak. If you can, work a little on weekends, evenings, early in the morning, and holidays. Every little bit counts. It fuels you with positive momentum. Follow your intuition — trust your gut — every step of the way. That person you feel compelled to contact on a hunch just might open the right door for you. Don't listen to

naysayers. Know that writing is extremely hard work. It's pure dedication. But it's worth it to feel the satisfaction of finally having your name in print, or seeing your friends waiting in line for your autograph.

Go outside and enjoy the great San Diego sunshine. Visit the beach, the mountains, local cafes, restaurants, and festivals. Grab a camera and notebook and go to a new neighborhood each weekend. Take pictures and write about them. Sit on a park bench and soak in the sun, or rain, and write about what surrounds you. Use your five senses to really feel, smell, taste, hear, and see what comes up. Then write about this in your notebook. Meet interesting people and mingle. We have such a vibrant, diverse city . . . take advantage of its opportunities and have fun in the process!

SJF: Many thanks, Mickey!

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