

Writing & redemption with Fern Michaels

Plus,
details on
her new
book!



From the fan-favorite *Sisterhood* series to the *Lost and Found* series, Fern Michaels has written more than 150 *New York Times* bestsellers—and her latest novel, *Smuggler's Cove*, is out August 26! We caught up with the beloved 92-year-old author ahead of the book's release to talk about her inspiration, her writing legacy and more

BY MELISSA D'AGNESE

Fern Michaels writes heartfelt novels about strong women persevering and prevailing through hardships—and she's been doing it since 1973. "I write from personal experience," Michaels tells *Woman's World*. "I woke up one day and was faced with being a single mother of five young children. I didn't have a college degree, but I had to soldier on—so I wrote a book." Now, 52 years later, Michaels has sold more than 100 million books. Her forthcoming novel, *Smuggler's Cove*, transports readers to coastal New Jersey. Here, Michaels talks about what inspired her latest book, her 300-year-old South Carolina home and the mantra that gets her through each day.

Woman's World: You first started writing when you were a young mom. What initially drew you to telling stories?

Fern Michaels: From *The Bobbsey Twins* to *Nancy Drew*, I was always a voracious

reader, but I had no real business experience at the time and five kids to take care of. I always say, you may not be able to change the circumstances, but you can change your approach—and that's what I did. My first manuscript didn't sell, but my second one did. Then I went on to write 161 books.

WW: Inspiring! What advice do you have for other women, who may feel insecure or lack experience but want to try something new?

Fern Michaels: Insecurity is something we put on ourselves—and we shouldn't. My advice is to take this quote from Zig Ziglar, a famous inspirational and motivational speaker, print it and paste it on the wall: "Your value does not decrease based on someone's inability to see your worth." If you really put your mind to something, you can do anything...but you have to believe in yourself first. Another personal mantra of mine is "if you persevere, you will prevail." I recite this to myself at least six times per day. It gets me through and motivates me during hard moments. I'm the living proof—if I can do it, so can you.

WW: Many of your books contain stories of women overcoming hardships or finding justice. What keeps bringing you back to these themes? How do these themes reflect your own life experience?

Fern Michaels: I try to tell stories that are true to real people's real experiences. And I'm a news junkie. When I see what other people are going through, I imagine it or say to myself, *What if it happened to me? How would I react?* Themes of perseverance also reflect my own experience—because that's what I had to do! I learned from my mistakes, I licked my wounds in private and then got up again and kept going.

WW: Looking back to when you first started writing, is there one thing you wish you could tell your younger self? Is there something you're most proud of today?

Fern Michaels: It goes back to believing in yourself and trusting your gut. I am a firm believer in *not* taking someone else's negativity as advice. Case in point: One single day changed my life. I mailed my first manuscript to a publisher and I hadn't gotten a response, so I sent in the second one. Then, a day later, a rejection letter for the first one arrived in the mail! Had I waited one more day, I would have never sent in that second manuscript, which *did* get accepted! And here I am today. Never give up, because, the truth is, you never know.

When I think of what I'm most proud of...it's me putting my kids through college and paying off my house with the money I earned. Me, just me. I love my 300-year-old southern home. It has a wraparound porch complete with white rocking chairs and baskets of ferns—it's where I sit and think of ideas for new novels. My success has also enabled me to donate to charities that need support, especially animal rescue organizations, including outfitting police dogs with bulletproof vests.

WW: Let's talk about your forthcoming book, *Smuggler's Cove*! It's the first in your new *Twin Lights* series. What inspired this story?

Fern Michaels: My inspiration for telling stories often comes from a news clip. As I said, I'm a news junkie. There was a short piece about a skull someone found along the Jersey Shore, which was believed to date back to the 1800s. The piece included

details of piracy and sunken ships. I lived in New Jersey for many years and was familiar with the shore and marine lore and decided to do a little more exploring on the subject. I discovered I could mix some intriguing history with a modern-day story. The Jersey Shore provided a perfect stage—the setting has its own personality. The book is steeped in history with a cast of characters from quirky to endearing to downright deplorable. And the lore figures well into the plot: Captain Kidd buried over a million dollars' worth of gold somewhere

along the Jersey Shore, as did the notorious Blackbeard—neither of which have been recovered. *Smuggler's Cove* centers on a character named Madison Taylor, who inherits a marina with her brother, Lincoln. But their plan to sell the property goes awry when a dead body is found floating under the dock and turns their new inheritance into a crime scene.

While the name "Smuggler's Cove" is fictional, it's a mixture of a few real local communities, which I hope the reader will enjoy visiting.

WW: Speaking of your readers, what do you hope they will take away from this story? And what do you think has endeared them to your work for so many decades?

Fern Michaels: Most of my readers are women. Many of them have struggled with divorce, widowhood, crummy kids and lousy bosses. The feeling I hope the readers get from this book is a sense of compassion for our fellow humans, regardless of their background. I hope all my books inspire women to believe in themselves, appreciate the beauty around them and be thankful

for the blessings that come into their lives. Sometimes it can be hard to recognize a blessing when your world is spinning out of control, but if you look hard enough you can always find a nugget. Take it and use it as your secret weapon of redemption.

WW: Out of all your books and series over the years, do you have a few that are personal favorites? If so, why?

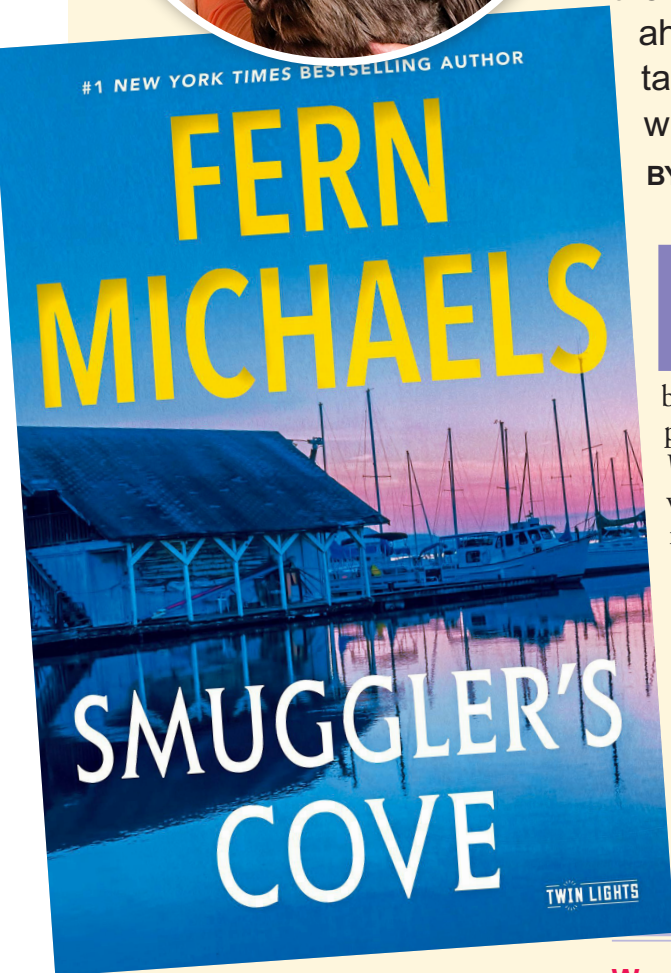
Fern Michaels: That's very hard to say, but I think one of my favorite projects is the *Sisterhood* series. Again, the news! I saw a woman get railroaded by the "justice" system and wished there was a way she could get her life back, along with a big dash of revenge. My publisher was horrified at the theme and didn't want to publish it. "What will your fans think?" he asked. I told him, "There are a lot of women who have suffered by the hands of rotten, evil people. They will be able to relate." Twenty-two years later this series is still going strong with book #37, *Code Blue*, coming out on December 16th. Almost every installment in the series has made the *The New York Times* Best Sellers list. I am always amazed and humbled.

WW: You once shared a piece of advice from your grandmother that has stayed with you. How was this impacted your life?

Fern Michaels: When I was little, my Polish grandmother said, "When God is good to you, you have to give back." For a while, I didn't know how to do that. It's easy to get caught up in our own lives so it's important to pause and consider the people around you and beyond. If you can lend a hand, then lend a hand. It can simply be a word of kindness, or a smile at a passerby. Each holds a value all its own.

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Smuggler's Cove is out August 26! To preorder it and for more information, visit FernMichaels.com and keep up with the author on Facebook @OfficialFernMichaels