



Shannon Vannatter Newsletter - September 2016

Dear Reader:

I've figured out a way to keep readers up to date. With each new release, I'll send out a newsletter. In it, I'll include updates on my family, blessings, books, writing, recipes, and giveaways. You'll need to sign up for my newsletter to enter the drawing for giveaways. If you sign up, I promise not to bombard your inbox. You'll only hear from me probably twice a year.

The Family

Once a year, we travel to TX to visit my husband's step mother. We call her Texas mom. She lives on a two hundred acre ranch, with a river running through it in the Texas Hill Country. On the way to Texas mom's ranch, we pass four Bass Pro Shops and two Cabela's. Since I have a husband and a fourteen year old boy, we usually stop at them all.

I nicknamed them Hotel California after an old Eagle's song. It was supposed to be about Hell, but it was nothing like the Hell in my Bible. I'm not saying the sportsman stores are bad. Just boring for a woman and we can't ever seem to leave, hence the song's line – You can check in any time you like, but you can never leave.

We spend HOURS at each store. I usually go through the housewares section and then go to the bench by the aquarium and watch the fish. Or even better, find a recliner and read. Each year at the Rock Wall Bass Pro, we take a picture of our son with the huge stuffed grizzly and chart his growth.



Logan with bear Nov 2014



Dec 2015 - Almost even



July 2016 - Even with paw, maybe slightly above

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This year, amazingly, we stopped at the Rock Wall store only. I'm still in shock. They said they didn't need anything this year. Of course, I ponder on what anyone could need from these types of stores anyway.

Our visit with Texas mom was great as usual. It's always like coming home and we all feel close to Grant's dad, even though we lost him in 2008. We eat like royalty while there and venison steaks are always on the menu for at least one meal during our stay.

This time, we made a day trip to Padre Island in Corpus Christi, about three hours one way. My second trip to the ocean. Back in 1998 or 99, we visited Galveston. I must say Corpus is prettier, the water is bluer. But there were only tiny sea shells. Since I'm partial to chlorine and water I can see through, I have no interest in swimming in the ocean. But I love strolling along the shore and collecting sea shells. I was disappointed, since there were actually shells worth picking up at Galveston.



Corpus Christi

But other than the lack of shelling, we had a great time. My husband and son enjoyed it much more than they thought they would. It was Logan's first trip to the ocean, so he and Grant went out about chest deep and jumped up to ride each wave as they rolled in. We decided it wasn't a day trip experience and plan to go again the future and spend the night there. I did decide that I don't want to live on the ocean. It's always windy and I'm an avid primer. It would drive me nuts to never have a good hair day.

God's Blessing

Since I'm an only child, I never thought I'd be an aunt. Until I started dating Grant. He already had a four-year old nephew when I met him. I loved Jason from the beginning. He was a cute kid and the nephew I never thought I'd have. He became a Christian in his teens and grew into a fun young man with a great sense of humor.

Until ten years ago, in his late twenties, he became a different person. Unkept, angry, and distant. He stopped working, moved in with a family member, and basically became a hermit. We were a bit slow to realize the change in him came from drug use. Determined not to enable him and with a young, impressionable son to think about, Grant and I took the tough love route, and basically cut Jason out of our lives.

We only saw him at the few family gatherings he was clean enough to attend over the years. It was painful to see the shadow of himself he'd become. Through those years, I prayed for him. But as time wore on, I gave up on him, wrote him off, decided he was too far gone and we'd never get him back. I still prayed, but I basically only went through the motions, expecting nothing to change, and that we'd eventually get a phone call that he was dead.

But I forgot how big God is. Jason got caught – not for the first time – but on a more serious charge than in the past. This time, no one bailed him out. And while he sat in jail, God got a hold of him. We were skeptical. He went to court and got five years parole with weekly drug tests he can't fake his way through. If he messes up once, he goes to prison.

Once he got out of jail, he came to church the next Wednesday night. He was clean, neat, well-groomed, and smelled good. I hugged him and told him how happy I was to see him there. That I expected him to come on Sunday morning and night too. He promised he would. He did and kept coming. I was still skeptical. He attended Celebrate Recovery at another church and the only time he missed ours was when he went to services with his CR friends.

As time passed, I saw a change. He got a job and got his own place. He went to the altar, prayed out loud, and started teaching our teens class. I stopped being skeptical, told him I was proud of him, and started enjoying him. At family gatherings, going to movies together, and eating out for lunch. I'd forgotten how much I missed him and routinely cry just from the joy of having him back. He's thirty-nine now and he's been clean for around nine months.

Life lesson learned - If you have a family member on drugs, don't give up on them. God is bigger than drugs.

Current Book

Reuniting with the Cowboy started out with a working title of *Rodeo Crossroads*. It was supposed to be the final book in my rodeo series. But then the *Heartsong*

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Presents line closed leaving four books on my contract in limbo. But God gave me another blessing. Harlequin decided to honor my contract through the *Love Inspired* line.

So now, *Reuniting with the Cowboy* ends the rodeo series in Aubrey, TX and kicks off a new cowboy series set in Bandera.

I'd long wanted to write Cody Warren's story. He was the hero's younger brother in *Rodeo Queen*. When it came time to write his story, I had to figure out a heroine for him. I remembered Ally, also from *Rodeo Queen* – the heroine's best friend whose dad was a policeman killed in the line of duty. I hinted at their story in the my last release, *Rodeo Reunion*. Add my love for animals and it was a fun story to write. Here's the back cover copy:

The Cowboy Next Door

A charming cowboy moving in next door shouldn't be bad news. But veterinarian Ally Curtis knows Cody Warren—she'd never forget the boy who left her when she needed him most. Cody is doing everything he can to show his beautiful neighbor he's not the wild bull rider he once was, from helping her find homes for her beloved strays, to protecting her when her business is threatened. But Cody has a secret that keeps him from fully reaching out. Yet as they continue to work together to promote her shelter, he can't keep himself from hoping that Ally might have a home for him...in her heart.

And here's scene that ended up on the cutting room floor due to word count constraints:

A low slung sports car revved it's engine as it turned into the lot and parked. The door opened and long bare female leg emerged, then another. Great.

"Wow." The blond sashayed toward them wearing way too little dress. "Looks like this is the place to hang out if you're looking for handsome cowboys."

"Hi Cindi." Ally picked up the rabbit cage. "I really appreciate your aunt letting us use her rabbits today." *I was hoping your aunt would pick them up.*

"Glad to help." She spoke to Ally, but her eyes never left Cody. "Who's this handsome cowboy? I'm Cindi Newman. Cindi, with an i." She traced an *i* in the air with her finger. "But my friends call me Cin."

Cody's jaw went slack.

Really? Was he the type to fall for Cin's flirting?

Was she for real?

"Cody Warren." He tipped his hat. "Nice to meet you, ma'am."

"Ally, surely you don't expect little ole me to carry that cage all the way to my car."

"I'll get these little guys for you." Cody took the cage from Ally. "Where to?" He knew. But he wouldn't let her know he'd noticed her arrival.

"My car's over there." She swayed with an exaggerated twist of her hips toward the red Jaguar. "So you attend church here?"

"Yes ma'am." He fell in stride beside her, so she wouldn't think he was taking in her show.

"Maybe I need to start attending."

"We always welcome visitors." He might as well be a piece of meat displayed on a hook from the predatory way she looked at him.

"Why haven't I seen you around before?"

"I used to travel a lot."

"Oh. Well, maybe we could go out sometime?"

"I stay pretty busy with my ranch." Thankfully, they made it to her car and he continued to the passenger side. "You want the rabbits in the front?"

"Sure."

"The kids loved them." He stashed the rabbits and made sure the cage wouldn't wobble during their ride.

"I'm glad." She opened the driver's side and locked in on him across the roof. "If you're about done here, maybe we could go out for coffee. Or something."

"Thanks." Her brand of something didn't interest him at all. "But we've still got a lot of clean up to do. Maybe you can come to church sometime."

"Umm. Church isn't really my thing."

"Well, that's a shame. But it was nice meeting you and thanks again for the rabbits."

Her mouth turned pouty, but she got in her car. With a wave, she was gone. Cody blew out a big breath and headed back to what was left of the petting zoo.

Ally glared at the retreating jaguar—the storm of the century brewing in her brown eyes.

Was she jealous? A goofy grin settled over his mouth as he strolled back to her.

"Her name should be New Man instead of Newman. I wonder if Cindi is spelled with an i on her birth certificate." Ally traced an *i* in the air, then jammed her thumb against her spangled back pocket and made a sizzling sound.

"I don't know." Cody swallowed hard. "But it sure was hot when you did it."

Maybe Cin will end up in another book someday.

Upcoming Books

Winning over the Cowboy releases in April. It moves to a new setting in Bandera, TX in the Texas Hill Country area with Ally's cousin. I'm busy writing the second Bandera book now. The characters visit Corpus Christi, which is partly why we visited there. I don't have an official title or a release date yet.

Books I'm Excited About

The Goodbye Bride by Denise Hunter and her upcoming *Just a Kiss*. I've loved this entire series. Actually, I love all of Denise's books. The Goodbye Bride had one of those opening scenes I wished I'd written and the remainder of the book was just as good. Once all the books in the series are released, I'll probably read them again one after the other.

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From the Start by Melissa Tagg and her upcoming *Keep Holding On*. *From the Start* had the best meeting between hero and heroine and made me wish I'd thought of it. More books I'll reread someday.

Her One and Only by Becky Wade. This book had the premise I wish I'd thought of and kept me turning pages. I've loved all of Becky's books as well and I'm sure I'll binge read her series again in the future.

Lakeside Sweetheart by Lenora Worth. I'm always excited when Lenora releases a new contemporary. This one is still in my TBR pile, but I already know I'll love it.

Hungry for home by Brenda S. Anderson. I've had the honor of critiquing Brenda's books and can't wait to see her upcoming, *Risking Love* in print come Oct 4th.

For Historical readers:

Seven Brides for Seven Texans Romance Collection: The Hart Brothers Must Marry or Lose Their Inheritance in 7 Historical Novellas by Amanda Barratt, Susan Page Davis, Keli Gwyn, Vickie McDonough, Gabrielle Meyer, Lorna Seilstad, and Erica Vetsch

For Mystery readers:

Dead Broke by Linda Fulkerson. I got to critique this one too and was happy to see it in print.

For Women's Fiction readers:

Intertwined and *Breaking Free* by Jennifer Slattery. I had the honor of critiquing and endorsing both of these. I'm also excited about her upcoming February release, *Restoring Love*.

Recipe:

In *Reuniting with the Cowboy*, Ally tries to butter up her new neighbor regarding her animal shelter by taking him a dessert. Here's the recipe:

Four Layer Delight

- 1 stick butter
- 1 c. pecans
- 1 c. flour
- 2 (8 oz.) cream cheese
- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 2 containers Cool Whip

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2 small boxes chocolate instant pudding
3 C. milk

Use a 13 x 9 inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees.

Mix together butter, pecans and flour. Press into baking dish and bake 20 minutes. Cool for 20 minutes.

Cream together cream cheese and powdered sugar. Fold in 1 container Cool Whip. Spread on cooled crust.

Blend together instant puddings and milk for 2-3 minutes; pour over cream cheese mixture. Cool for 20 minutes.

Spread 1 container Cool Whip over top and garnish with pecans. Refrigerate for 2-4 hours (or overnight) before serving.

My mom used to make it with vanilla pudding instead of chocolate with pecans and coconut in the crust and on top. Since my husband likes the chocolate version, I make both. I buy one box vanilla and one chocolate, then split it down the middle with half and half. That way we're both happy.

2 Questions I Get Asked Most:

1. Where can I get your book?

The Love Inspired line is carried in a lot of stores, including Walmart. They're also online at Amazon, Christian Book, Harlequin, along with a host of other sites. The best way to get my book or anyone else's in print is to buy your copy when it first releases. Unfortunately, books don't stay in print forever. If you don't get the book quickly, you'll only be able to get it in digital format.

2. What order should I read your books in?

The Arkansas series: *White Roses*, *White Doves*, *White Pearls*. All three are available in one volume called *Arkansas Weddings*.

The Rodeo series: *Rodeo Dust*, *Rodeo Hero*, *Rodeo Ashes*, *Rodeo Regrets*, *Rodeo Queen*, *Rodeo Song*, *Rodeo Family*, *Rodeo Reunion*.

The Texas Cowboy series: *Reuniting with the Cowboy*, *Winning over the Cowboy* - April 2017 and two more titles TBA.

Giveaway:

- A handmade paw print memory board to celebrate my new release. I don't have it made yet, but it will be cute.
- 4 print copies of *Reuniting with the Cowboy*

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- 1 print copy of *Breaking Free* by Jennifer Slattery
- 1 Nook or Kindle version of *Risking Love* by Brenda S. Anderson
- 1 print copy of *Dead Broke* by Linda Fulkerson

Remember to sign up for my newsletter to enter the drawings

**Follow my blog tour for more chances to win
Reuniting with the Cowboy:**

Aug 22: <http://seekerville.blogspot.com/>

Sept 1 & 2: <http://rosemccauley.com/>

Sept 3 & 7: <https://writingpromptsthoughtsideas.wordpress.com/>

Sept 5: <http://jenniferhallmark.com/blog/>

Sept 5: <http://www.gailkittleon.com/blog/>

Sept 12 & 15 – <http://www.shannonvannatter.com/blog/>

Sept 13: <https://jenpheobus.com/>

Sept 16: <http://www.jamesrcallan.com/blog/>

Sept 21: <http://www.faithfriendschocolate.com/>

Sept 27: <http://brendaandersonbooks.com/blog/>

Oct 21: <http://capturingtheidea.blogspot.com/>