

Spies Meet At Vienna Inn

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Molly Best Tinsley, former Reston resident, and Karetta Hubbard of McLean co-authored 'Satan's Chamber,' a spy novel set in Vienna, McLean and the Sudan.

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COMMUNITY

Spies Meet at Vienna Inn

Local writer sets spy novel locally.

BY DONNA MANZ
THE CONNECTION

Who knew that Vienna and McLean were such hotbeds of international intrigue?

For starters, prominent suspense writers John Gilstrap and Patricia Cornwell did, and now, McLean's Karetta Hubbard and co-author Molly Best Tinsley know that, too.

Together, Hubbard and Tinsley co-wrote "Satan's Chamber," a spy thriller that weaves together CIA, military and Sudanese characters and plants them in familiar places — Vienna and McLean — and places that rested on the authors' research, as the Sudan did.

"We both wanted two things from our spy thriller," said Hubbard. "The first was to 'thrill,' to provoke the heart-pounding emotional intensity that makes people want to keep turning the pages. At the same time, we wanted to address fundamental human concerns like survival and the heroic struggle between right and wrong."

On Sept. 27, at the Vienna Inn, where government intelligence officers Maud and Johnny make important plans, the authors hosted a launch and readings from "Satan's Chamber." The Inn was packed with friends, family and coworkers, who cheered on the launch of Hubbard and Tinsley's first spy novel.

About half of the novel takes place in McLean, at various locations around Route 123 ... the CIA headquarters, near the Tysons Galleria, and along the Vienna Route 123/Chain Bridge Road corridor.

"The VI [Vienna Inn] is an institution in Vienna," said Hubbard. "When we needed a clandestine meeting spot, we thought, 'What better place than this?'"

"In most spy thrillers, the main character is male," said Tinsley. "We wanted to create a female operative, a woman working in national clandestine services." From that vision, CIA operative Tory Pierce was born. The director of intelligence, also a woman, meets secretly with an admiral at a back corner table at the Vienna Inn where they make plans affecting Pierce. Pierce must reach out to sources in the Sudan to protect her name, career and reputation.

THE CO-AUTHORS MET 30 years ago on a tennis court in Reston; their daughters are the same age and Hubbard and Tinsley forged a friendship that took them beyond their comfort zone, culminating in a novel of international intrigue. From Hubbard's home in McLean to Tinsley's in Oregon, the authors



PHOTO BY DONNA MANZ/THE CONNECTION

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swapped chapters by e-mail. It wasn't that difficult, Hubbard said. "The characters tell you what's going to happen next. You listen to them."

While many of the novel's scenes play out in Vienna, McLean and Tysons Corner, the thrust of the action lies in the Sudan. Learning about the complex structures in the Sudan, to ensure authenticity, was a significant research project for the co-authors.

Writing is a learning experience, Tinsley said.

Hubbard's McLean neighbor, Dianne Lipsey, was one of Hubbard's supporters at the Vienna Inn. "I would guess she approached this with a huge amount of creativity, and then researched it thoroughly for content," said Lipsey. "I'm sure this will be a great collaboration."

HUBBARD IS CO-FOUNDER of NewPoint Strategies, LLC, a consulting firm specializing in high-risk management issues. The CIA was a client of Hubbard's 20 years ago. She moved to

McLean in 1993.

Molly Best Tinsley, a professor emeritus from the U.S. Naval Academy, currently lives in Oregon. Her sister and brother-in-law live in McLean and she makes intermittent visits back to the area to visit with them, her daughter and granddaughter in Maryland, and to collaborate with Hubbard.

"Satan's Chamber" is available at www.amazon.com and www.Satanschamber.com.

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