

Interview with Jacqueline Randolph, author of the Deception Series

Jacqueline Randolph is a US Air Force officer, pilot, author, business owner, and veteran of community theater, community service (group homes, hospice, domestic violence), and missionary trips (Africa, Alaska, Mexico, Argentina). She has traveled throughout the world as a C-130 aircrew member performing military special operations (famed 101st and 82nd Airborne), NASA shuttle support missions, and delivering United Nations aid to countries ravaged by war and natural disasters. She has served as a college professor in the Mississippi Delta and commanded the Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite constellation and ballistic missiles. She is an adventurer who enjoys ballroom dancing, the water (rafting, snorkeling), the snow (skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling), the sky (skydiving/ballooning/gliders), and trips to the arctic/Antarctic circles. An inductee in Marquis' "Who's Who in America" since 2003 and the 2006-2007 winner of the Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award, she aspires to be an Alaskan bush pilot, Peace Corp volunteer, and a third world missionary pilot.

Tyler: Thank you for joining me today, Jacqueline. I'm excited to have you tell us more about your series. Just published is "Deception's Legacy," the third of four books planned for your "Deception" series about the character Skye Matthews. To begin, will you tell us a little bit about Skye Matthews and why she is an attractive character both to yourself and readers?

Jacqueline: Thank you, Tyler, for the opportunity to discuss my series and that crazy lady, Skye Matthews. I must confess that she takes me to places that frighten and puzzle me at times. I hope she isn't solely attractive. I hope readers are angered by her, fascinated, repulsed, admiring, and pitying. In the midst of all her strength, beauty, frailty and neurosis my hope is that she inspires MYSELF and readers to revel in life's adventures. Her journey isn't fair or easy but she continues through life and love and "mule kicks in the face" with an attitude and willingness to strive upward and forward. All the characters in Skye's life play pivotal roles in shaping her to succeed in life's encounters—no doubt had she a choice she would have avoided some of those relationships. I hope readers will take a closer look at the relationships in their own lives and know they serve to develop them in some way to meet future challenges. None of us have the complete perspective on any situation or all the answers in our personal lives. Only God is privy to all the solutions and how the puzzles of life are perfectly assembled—Skye never gets too far without bumping into this truth.

Tyler: I understand Skye and the novels themselves are semi-autobiographical. Will you explain that connection for us, please?

Jacqueline: I created this character from my need to share all my incredible experiences and travels throughout the world. Be it the plight of the Inuits in the Northwest territories, the Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, casualties of war in Bosnia, the daily horrors in Africa, or the victimization during Spain's Inquisition—there are stories to be told. SO, Skye Mathews allows to me to share my travels (each book explores no less than five countries or states) and my military and missionary experiences. Every character can be traced to an actual person in my life—especially Skye's undercover roles. Skye's biracial ethnicity is based on the fact that I am African-American born in Madrid, Spain because my military parents were assigned there at the time. Her familiarity with weapons and airplanes are my military experience. Her education, hobbies, sense of style, need for justice/service, and personality are (embarrassingly) mine. I have two friends who are the physical and personality models for the character of Rhys. One has eerie blue eyes and the blackest hair that he wears shoulder length. The other friend is the kindest and most personable person I know. I've never seen him raging or raise his voice even when he is angry and he possesses not a trace of disloyalty to his friends and family and church. The character of Gabe is based on

my longtime military mentor who is the complete stereotype of an Irish Catholic Bostonian. The pastors are my real pastors—even down to the names. The character of Red is modeled after every two-bit, gutless, heartless, rabid terrorist and thug I've had the displeasure of encountering. I could trace every person, setting, and event in the novel to my life.

Tyler: What do these friends say to your basing your characters on them?

Jacqueline: My friends love it and they often ask me to include them in the novels. I warn them that they may not be the good guy at which they salivate at being the bad guy. The rapist, sadist, drug pusher Spanish noble, Don Cristobal (Don Christy for short) was based on my military officer friend, Don Christy. He loved the character. In that same novel I use the actual quotes, names and daughter of my boss the immoral and vicious army officer, Lt Col Dexter Gordon—a vicious, conniving, backstabbing people-hater. I used the actual character and names of my pastors in the novels. The only character I used without permission is that of the spoilt, rude and tantrum-prone Masquela from “Deception’s Guard.” She is based on three of the most bitter and nastiest female coworkers I’ve worked with throughout my career. Thank God there has only been three. I often tease my friends by telling them that one day there will be a talk show on the real people behind the “Deception” series characters and people will be shocked to see the differences.

Tyler: Jacqueline, Skye is a biracial character, both Spanish and African-American. I also understand in the new novel, “Deception’s Legacy,” that Skye’s paternity is questioned. Is race important as an underlying theme in the novel(s)?

Jacqueline: I find the diversity of culture, race, and ethnicity fascinating. I love learning about people and their world during my travels. I’d much rather avoid the tourist track and meet real people. Race is important in my novels in that I show a beautiful tapestry rather than the problems and discord of diversity. Skye’s ability to blend into her undercover environment, Rhys’ assimilation in a household of black and Hispanic culture, their children are three different colorings and in the latest book, “Deception’s Legacy,” Skye’s paternity rage is about character and morality versus race. I purposefully placed Skye’s family home in the Mississippi Delta where I served as a military college professor for three years. The region is STILL essentially segregated—Skye’s experiences there are based on my life in the Delta during 1998-2001 where I broke racial stereotypes in the colleges, community theater, pilot community, restaurant and churches.

Tyler: Skye is a DEA agent. While our readers will know what an FBI or CIA agent is, will you explain for us what a DEA agent is? Why did you choose for Skye to be this type of agent?

Jacqueline: The Drug Enforcement Administration made more than 30,000 arrests last year and is under the Department of Justice. This organization evolved from the Dept of Prohibition in the 1920s. Because Skye’s ethnicity blends well with the Hispanic culture it made sense to have her excel as an undercover agent in Latin America where she best blends into the environment. As the US continues to struggle with narcotics and illegal immigrants flowing across our southern border—Skye’s skills would be most effective in the DEA or border patrol—I chose the DEA.

DEA Mission: The mission of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States and bring to the criminal and civil justice system of the United States, those organizations and principal members of organizations, involved in the growing, manufacture, or distribution of controlled substances appearing in or destined for illicit traffic in the United States; and to recommend and support non-enforcement programs aimed at reducing the availability of illicit controlled substances on the domestic and international markets. Coordination and cooperation with federal, state and local law enforcement officials on mutual drug enforcement efforts. Liaison with the United Nations, Interpol, and other organizations on matters relating to international drug control programs (official DEA Website).

Tyler: Skye is also involved with a man, a CEO named Rhys Wielde. Will you tell us more about his character and his relationship with Skye?

Jacqueline: Skye’s disillusion with men had resulted in her complete disregard for the intimacy part of her life. In the first novel, “Deception’s Guard,” not only had she sworn off dating and intimacy for years, her negative stereotypes of men had embittered all her relationships and perspectives. Rhys Wield is a CEO of a bioinformatics research and development company who requires a bodyguard as he assists in a DEA investigation in trapping criminals in his company. Rhys’s character had to break each and every one of her stereotypes even as she tried desperately to cram him into her narrow view of men. Rhys represents growth, change, and opportunities to excel

and prosper. In the reader's life their "Rhys" might be a job, or friendship, or hobby that is way beyond our comfort zone or perspective—but if we'd dump our preconceptions and make a leap of faith entire vistas are ours. Rhys had to be a strong character to compliment Skye's strengths. If he couldn't deal with a woman as his bodyguard he would have never advanced beyond Skye's emotional barricade. Even after breaching that formidable barrier he had to possess great quantities of self-assurance and determination to continue fighting a seemingly losing battle for their relationship. I've enjoyed exploring their relationship with each book in the series—it is dynamic, rich, and depthless. Another interviewer once asked if Rhys is an actual person. I replied "No, that type of man only exists in the pages of fiction." Ah well, I suppose I still have more growth and experience to muddle through before I catch up with Skye (smile).

Tyler: Tell me a little bit more about the plot of the third novel, "Deception's Legacy." I understand there is a connection between the Spanish Inquisition in the 1400s and the present day.

Jacqueline: I wanted to write a historical fiction novel. When I learned of the actual events surrounding the 1966 collision of two US Air Force planes over Southern Spain I was fascinated. This event is still the largest nuclear cleanup in history AND the cause of the accident is still unknown. The KC-135 "Gas station in the sky" had severe difficulties in hooking up to a B-52 Bomber which carried four H bombs. The collision of the aircrafts resulted in the nuclear contamination of a coastal town called Palomares. Next, I thought of the Spanish Inquisition in the 1400s and wondered about a connection between the two events. Finally, I read about the award of the 1964 Nobel Prize in Physics to the creators of a microwave laser and suddenly I saw a connection. I inserted Skye's father as a pilot of that B-52 and her mother as a Palomares resident and a generous dose of virulent hatred and voila—"Deception's Legacy."

Tyler: I understand the novel also projects into the 2030s. Why did you decide to set it in the future, and what difficulties did you find in writing a futuristic novel?

Jacqueline: The "Deception" Series consists of four books—so—I wanted to explore Skye and Rhys's lives as seniors. Given her birth in 1966, she would be in her 60s in 2030, which would also allow her son to be old enough to be a DEA agent and her mother to still be active enough for her role in the novel. I wanted to create technologies that were just slightly more advanced to ensure believability—that was fun and not difficult. Some of these include video phones (versus camera phones) which provided real time interaction. Other advances included advanced car in-line engine sizes, bio-recognition car ignitions, and bionic medical advances.

Tyler: What did you find difficult and what did you find enjoyable in writing novel that is simultaneously historical fiction and science fiction?

Jacqueline: The most difficult thing was staying true to history while creating additional events. The Spanish Inquisition and the 1966 nuclear accident have a lot of unknown elements so it was easy making up characters and events and inserting them into history—it was fun. The creation of futuristic technology was exciting—at one point my military job included fielding weapons for the future. Our research labs are making incredible advances. I didn't want my technology too far advanced from what we have today. Most prominent in the story was the ViD phone—a real time interactive communication device that looks like a cell phone BUT the screen displays the called and caller. The screen may be held in front of you so to speak and view reactions as if they were present. I also enjoyed inserting holographic sciences in the novel—this technology was used to secure a clandestine meeting room.

Tyler: You write about many countries in your books. In the first novel, the settings included Peru, Ecuador, Colorado and Mississippi and the second book included Argentina, Antarctica, and Washington D.C.? How do you decide which locations to include in the books, and have you visited all these places you write about?

Jacqueline: Absolutely I've visited these places and have THOROUGHLY enjoyed the adventures. First I decide upon the plot and then I determine what country/state best fits with the plot. I'd visited Argentina and Antarctica in 2006 and was so excited about the visit I fit the plot into the location. The fourth book I'm working on, "Deception's Bind," is set in Mexico and the atrocities endured by the Guatemalan refugees in the Chiapas state (Mexico). I drew heavily from my mission trips to Juarez, Mexico for the setting. I wish every American could experience the abject poverty and conditions in which the MAJORITY of the world lives. I desperately try to convey this theme in my books.

Tyler: Jacqueline, does a reader have to read the books in order, or can each one be read on its own?

Jacqueline: I think one of the reviewers said it best. “You can read this book alone, and you will understand everything, but I believe that if you read the books in order, you will be more affected by the emotional intensity of the storyline.”

Tyler: All the novels have “Deception” in the title. Why did you choose to focus on deception?

Jacqueline: Primarily because of the undercover roles and deceptions that characterize Skye Matthews work as a DEA agent. Not until the third book, “Deception’s Legacy,” do we realize that generations of Skye’s family are steeped in deception—whether a family curse or talent.

Tyler: Did you start out planning that the novels would be a series?

Jacqueline: No. The first novel was such a shock to me. I woke up one morning with an entire story roaring in my mind—to the point of a headache. It was as if a movie played continuously in my head. I grabbed pen and paper and began to scribble down what I saw and after an hour I had twenty handwritten pages. I raced to the computer and dumped it there and my fingers continued to burn up the keyboard until they finally stopped and the “movie” ended four days later. After printing out the 300-page draft and reading it I was amazed at the plot ties, subject matter, characters, pace, the entire novel. Two years later, I was still waiting for another inspirational “bolt of lightning” which never came. So, I decided to go it alone and commenced to pick up pen and paper again. As soon as the pen touched the paper we were off again—this time the writing took two months. I wrote the third book in two months during my visit to Cuba. Readers have begged me to go beyond the four novels but at this time in my life I’m pretty certain this series is complete at four novels. That will give me opportunity to start another series and write some nonfiction.

Tyler: Will you give us any hint of what will happen to Skye in the fourth novel?

Jacqueline: The fourth and last novel is “Deception’s Bind” and I’ll go one further and provide you with the cover and the storyline. Since the first novel, “Deception’s Guard,” there has been an ethereal connection or bind between Skye and Rhys that goes beyond time, distance and deception. Despite her many disguises they have been drawn together—which disgusts Rhys when he finds himself attracted to a crippled old hag of a servant in Peru. The fourth book is a sequel to the first book in which they not only meet and assist one another but they save one another’s lives—without ever knowing it! I wanted to write a sort of sci-fi suspense/adventure. Throughout the entire book they never meet or realize who they are saving/assisting. There is an added bonus of the glimpse into their lives before they met one another (in “Deception’s Guard”) and what their futures would have been had they not; an embittered Skye and a crippled Rhys. I liken the story to a wooden revolving door in which they enter/exit on opposite sides—one going in and one going out—and both unwittingly helping the other through.

Tyler: Thanks, Jacqueline. It definitely sounds like it will be another hit for you. Jacqueline, I am very impressed with your biography—from being in the US Air Force, to writing novels, to missionary work, you’ve had quite a full life. Which of your accomplishments are you most proud of and why?

Jacqueline: That is a very difficult question! I’m most proud of serving—that theme colors all my endeavors. Whether serving God, America, or people. Even my writing is an attempt to give hope and pleasure. If you held my hand to the fire on this question, I’d have to say my service to God—be it service in my local community or overseas mission work. This service of presenting the love of God has an eternal impact—by knowing God you have the solution/answers/hope for any situation.

Tyler: Jacqueline, tell me a little bit about your overseas mission work. How did you get involved with it, and why do you think it is so important? What can people do if they want to get involved in this kind of work?

Jacqueline: Beware—this is a subject of which I am quite passionate. I’ve always loved the adventure of traveling throughout the world. I usually allowed myself one vacation trip and one mission trip annually. Increasingly, I’ve been unable to ignore the great suffering, poverty and injustice in my travels. So, several years ago I felt God directing me to orient all my travels toward helping others. I have been richly rewarded in this humane way of traveling. I’ve built one-room cement dwellings for families living on garbage dumps in Juarez, Mexico that an American would not even use for a garage. I’ve taught illiterate woman and children in East Africa who have been more grateful for literacy than any American I’ve encountered. I’ve embraced orphaned children in Argentina who dream of one day living in the paradise called America yet daily witness Americans who possess not an ounce of gratitude that we live better than 80 percent of the world. It is unconscionable that the majority of women and children in the world have only known brutality and despair. It is heart-wrenching that less than 25 percent of the

world enjoy the resources, food, and technology that should be shared with the entire planet; it is criminal that ethnic cleaning, sexism, racism, terrorism run rampant in our world while those who have the power to intervene turn their blind eyes away. Focusing at home, why are we allowing the moral depravity and intellectual decline of our younger generations? Why are the elderly discarded as if they've made no contributions in our lives? How is it that our orphanages and foster homes are bursting at the seams with no relief. Why are our teen pregnancy rates and teen suicide rates higher than any other industrialized country? It would only take a couple of hours a month to mentor one young person—how great a change we could achieve if each adult committed to one young person or one senior citizen. I have volunteered at a youth group home for abused/abandoned teens, reached out to battered women's shelters and adult rehabilitation centers and big brothers/big sisters, tutored at inner city elementary schools and taught a success skills class to high school seniors. There are so many opportunities in America and throughout the world to reach out and show love—God's love being the ultimate love. The Bible tells us about God's mission in coming to earth, "...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."(John 10:10). My heroine, Mother Theresa, best sums my passion for people. "Our love for God in action is our service to the poor. There are poor people everywhere. To be unwanted, lonely, and unloved is worse than to be hungry. Even in well to do neighborhoods you find cases of lonely people. Visit them. Cheer them up. Some people wrote to me they wished to come and work as volunteers in Calcutta. I wrote back: 'No need to come to Calcutta. Start working in your own country. Begin in your house, in your neighborhood, in your town or village, in your district. Discover the people in need of spiritual or material help. In some counties of Asia or Africa there is mostly material poverty; but in the rich countries of Europe and America there is much spiritual poverty and it is more difficult to cure.'"

For people interested in doing missionary work, a wonderful start would be to visit www.crossculturalsolutions.org which is an organization that combines vacationing with mission work.

Tyler: What is next for you, Jacqueline? Will you tell us what kinds of novels you'll write once the "Deception" series is finished?

Jacqueline: Yes, I'll definitely continue writing. Haven't decided what the next series looks like—but rest assured there will be another series. I've been thinking for some time about writing a nonfiction book regarding my time in the Mississippi Delta—titled "My Invisible Life." I effortlessly crossed racial lines with no backlash whereas others (black and white) couldn't or wouldn't. Another project that has occurred to me just this year is writing articles. There is a demand for freelance writers and I certainly have a world of experience to share.

Tyler: Thank you for joining me today, Jacqueline. Before we go, will you tell our readers about your website and what additional information may be found there about "Deception's Legacy" and the earlier Deception novels?

Jacqueline: The website is <http://writers.fultus.com/randolph> You'll find full reviews, synopsis, excerpts, interviews, and personal photographs. In February or March 2008 a publicity video clip will be added to the website. I'm excited about the video and we're working hard to depict Skye's world accurately. That's the difficulty as every reader's imagination is different. Tyler, thank you so much for the opportunity to share the "Deception" series—I enjoy Skye's world and boy wouldn't I love to live her life!

Tyler: I'd say your life has been just as exciting, Jacqueline. My best wishes to you!