

KATHLEEN WOODIWISS, 1939-2007

Born Kathleen Erin Hogg on June 3, 1939, in Alexandria, Louisiana, this future legend of romance novelists grew up as the youngest of eight siblings. Kathleen had an urge to express herself through writing from a young age, and was known to tell herself stories at night to help herself fall asleep. At the age of 16, she met Air Force First Lieutenant Ross Woodiwiss at a sock hop for servicemen, and one year later they were married.

Her husband was soon posted to Japan, where Kathleen took up writing (in longhand) to fill up the days, although she also enjoyed fashion modeling for an American-owned fashion agency. She later was known for designing and creating many of her own gowns and costumes for numerous officers club functions that she attended with Ross.

After almost four years in Japan, Ross was relocated to Topeka, Kansas. On returning to the U.S., Kathleen again took up the task of finishing her first book, borrowing an electric typewriter she had given to her husband for a Christmas present, to make the job less time-consuming than the handwritten format she had been using. Her first novel, The Flame and the Flower, was rejected by numerous agents and hardcover publishers for its size. At 600 pages, they considered it to be too long to be published as a romance novel. She ignored the standard advice given her by all her rejection letters, retyped the manuscript, and resubmitted the book to paperback publisher Avon, who purchased it and set up an initial 500,000 copy print run. This novel, first published in 1972, became a *New York Times* bestseller, selling over 2.3 million copies in its first four years of publication, and is commonly credited with launching the modern romance genre.

The success of The Flame and the Flower launched a new style of writing romance fiction, considerably different from that of the simpler "Barbara Cartland" or "Harlequin Romance" format. A new wave of authors could concentrate on historical fiction tracking a monogamous relationship between a helpless heroine and the hero who rescued her, even if he had been the one to place her in danger. Romance novels began to feature longer plots, more controversial situations and characters, and more intimate and steamy sex scenes – The Flame and the Flower was one of the first romance novels "to follow the principals into the bedroom." Woodiwiss, herself, became an inspiration to scores of many of today's most popular romance authors, even helping LaVyrle Spencer achieve her first publishing contract.

Over the years, Woodiwiss published 12 *New York Times* bestselling novels, with her final, thirteenth book (Everlasting) scheduled for the fall of 2007. She was known more for the quality of her writing, rather than the number of novels she produced. She frequently took anywhere from 3 to 5 years to work on a single book. At times, this was attributed to an admitted case of burnout and/or writers block. But Woodiwiss also faced numerous health issues in her later years, before she succumbed to cancer on July 6, 2007. Her husband, Ross, and one of her sons, Dorren, preceded her in death, but she is survived by two remaining sons (Sean and Heath), their wives and numerous grandchildren.

BOOKS:

The Novels

The Flame and the Flower (1972)
The Wolf and the Dove (1974)
Shanna (1977)
Ashes in the Wind (1979)
A Rose in Winter (1981)
Come Love a Stranger (1984)
So Worthy My Love (1989)
Forever in Your Embrace (1992)
Petals on the River (1997)
The Elusive Flame (1998)
A Season Beyond a Kiss (2000)
The Reluctant Suitor (2002)
Everlasting (2007)

The Birmingham Family Saga

The Flame and the Flower (1972)
"The Kiss" – in Three Weddings and a Kiss (1995)
"Beyond the Kiss" – in Married at Twilight (1996)
A Season Beyond a Kiss (2000)
The Elusive Flame (1998)

Short Stories

"The Kiss" (Three Weddings and a Kiss - 1995)
"Beyond the Kiss" (Married at Twilight – 1996)

