

Media Kit for *That Summer She Found Her Voice: A Retro Novel*

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Professional Organizations: Maryland Writers' Association; National Women's Book Association; Eastern Shore Writers' Association, Authors Guild

Book Available at [Bookshop.org](#), [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), and other online retail outlets

Book Description for *That Summer She Found Her Voice: A Retro Novel*

Genre: Coming of Age/ 20th Century Historical/Women's Fiction

BISAC Categories: Fiction Women FIC044000; Fiction/Performing Arts/Music FIC133030; Fiction/Historical/20thCentury/General FIC014080

Blurb:

Set against a backdrop of the 1970's music scene, *That Summer She Found Her Voice: A Retro Novel* tells the story of 23-year-old Margie Stevens as she pulls herself out of a spiraling, heartbreak-induced depression and begins a personal journey of discovery.

Clarifying her own views on emerging feminism, social injustice, and personal spirituality - all while touring across the country as a singer in King Vido's Swing Band - Margie encounters sexist and moral challenges that cause her to question her future path.

Will Margie find the clarity to break away from her parent's set of values and determine her own path?

Will she find the courage to conquer fears of intimidation from the band leader and others on the tour?

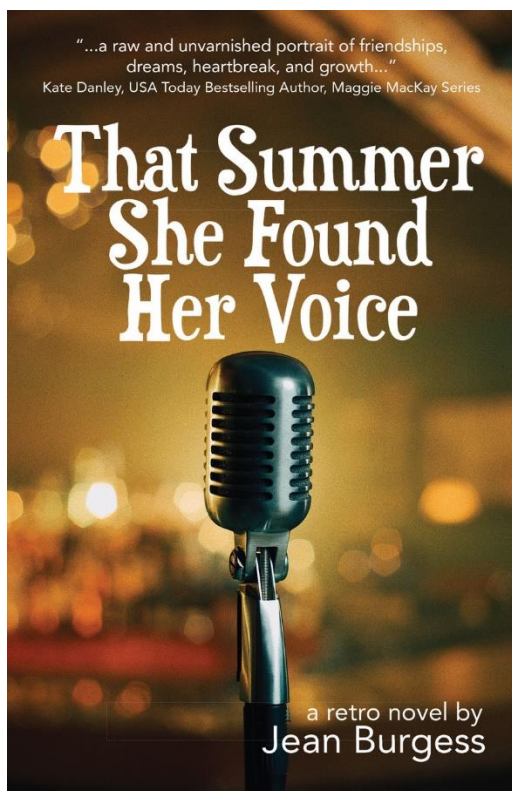
And finally, will she learn to speak up for herself and discover her authentic voice?

Presentation Topics:

- The Inspiration, the Writing Process, and the Road to Indie Publishing
- The Road to Traditional Fiction and Nonfiction Publishing: One Author's Journey
- Historical Research Strategies in Writing Fiction
- Baltimore Music Scene in the Late 1970s
- The Search for Authentic Voice: 1970s and today

Additional Topics:

- You've Published Your Book, Now What? Creative & Practical Approaches to Direct Marketing"
- Take Your Author Reading from Drab to Dynamic: Tips & Practices to Improve Your Presentation
- Five Theatre Techniques That May Enhance Your Fiction Writing
- Turning Your Writing Into A Play: The Essentials You Need to Know



Target Audiences:

- Women or men who may be struggling to speak up for themselves and searching for their authentic voice.
- Any reader, young or young-at-heart, who enjoys the imagery-filled nostalgia of stories set in the 1970s.

- Readers who love a behind-the-scenes peek into the world of a performing band that tours across the United States. (Think *Daisy Jones and the Six* or the Tom Hanks film *That Thing You Do*.)
- Book clubs searching for books that will stimulate group conversations about personal values, social injustice, and spiritual beliefs. (Note: This book contains "Topics for Discussion." As a bonus, book clubs interested in receiving a FREE digital packet of Book Club Activities as well as book-related trivia can email me at jean@jeanburgessauthor.com.)
- Women who may have experienced sexual assault and understand suppressing the experience.

Trade Reviews/Advance Praise/and Honors:

****Recognized as a Top Notable Title in 2024 Fiction by Shelf Unbound****

"...a memorable saga of self-discovery, social transformation, and career-changing paradigms..."

Jean Burgess creates a memorable saga of self-discovery, social transformation, and career-changing paradigms in *That Summer She Found Her Voice*. These explore more than one girl's evolutionary process, but also the changes buffeting America.

– D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review

[For full review, read here](#)

"...a raw and unvarnished portrait of friendships, dreams, heartbreak, and growth..."

A raw and unvarnished portrait of friendships, dreams, heartbreak, and growth. A nostalgic dance through the 1970s Mid-Atlantic region that will bring back so many memories of forgotten places and hidden treasures!"

- Kate Danley, USA Today Bestselling Author, Maggie MacKay: Maggie Tracker Series

"...meticulous attention to historical detail captures the flavor of the 70s..."

Not all young women were bra-burning feminists in the 70s, including Margie, the protagonist of *That Summer She Found Her Voice*. Margie's passage from a naïve recent college graduate to a woman who lives her values poignantly reflects the path of so many young women who came of age in the wake of the Second Wave of feminism. While traveling cross-country as a vocalist in a swing band, Margie also takes an inward journey, leading her to a place where she no longer defines her self-worth by her relationship with a man—be it her father, her boyfriend, or her boss. Burgess's meticulous attention to historical detail captures the flavor of the 70s, enhancing her engaging plot and compassionate characterization in a way that sheds light on the trajectory of feminism's influence on American pop culture.

- Barbara Van Aken, Ph.D. Department of English, Case Western Reserve University

"...a well-written and engaging story..."

Being from a family of Maryland musicians, I found Jean Burgess' novel a well-written and engaging story of living with a band on the road. The protagonist is Margie, a young woman beginning her career as a musician and thrilled at the opportunity of playing with a traveling band. Her experiences and the characters she meets ring true.

- Eileen Haavik McIntire, author of the 90s Club Cozy Mysteries

"...a passionate first-person account..."

That Summer She Found Her Voice is the story of a young woman, Margie, who finds her way out of a depression caused by a failed romantic relationship by touring the US as a singer with King Vido's Swing Band in the late 1970s. Burgess has curated a passionate first-person account of self-discovery. As an experienced theatrical director and playwright, she knows how to create sympathetic characters and compelling plots, using her considerable talent and craftsmanship to tell this story.

- Ira Domser, Professor Emeritus Dramatic Arts, McDaniel College

Author Bio (short):

Jean Burgess is an author, editor, playwright, and former theatre educator. She writes both nonfiction and fiction, enjoys presenting writing workshops and presentations, and volunteers as a facilitator with a local Teen Writing Club. Jean holds a Masters in Theatre from Northwestern University and Ph.D. in Educational Theatre from New York University.

Author Bio (long):

For over 40 years, Jean Burgess has told stories on stage as a theater director and actor. Her debut fiction, *That Summer She Found Her Voice: A Retro Novel*, was published in April 2024 by Apprentice House Press. Her contest-winning play, "Deleted," as well as two other short plays, is published in her book, *Collaborative Stage Directing: A Guide to Creating and Managing a Positive Theatre Environment* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2019.) She presents writing workshops, freelances as an editor, and is available as a speaker on a variety of book and writing topics. Jean holds a Masters in Theatre from Northwestern University and Ph.D. in Educational Theatre from New York University. Her professional memberships include The Authors Guild, Eastern Shore Writers' Association, and Maryland Writers' Association, for which she volunteers as a Teen Writing Club advisor.

Photo:



Sample Interview:

As an introduction, give us a little information about yourself.

I am a writer of both fiction and nonfiction, a playwright, and a former actor, director, and theater educator. While I love all things theater-related and literary, I'm also a birdwatching nerd and a lover of the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's Eastern Shore! I hold an MA in Theatre from Northwestern University and PhD from New York University.

Tell us about your writing/published book(s).

I write both fiction and nonfiction. My nonfiction, *Collaborative Stage Directing: A Guide to Creating and Managing a Positive Theatre Environment*, was published by Routledge/ Taylor & Francis in 2019. My debut fiction, *That Summer She Found Her Voice: A Retro Novel*, was published by Apprentice House Press in April 2024.

Where's your favorite place to write?

My office/library. I like to be surrounded by vision boards, character descriptions, and word lists I've created to assist and prompt me in my writing. However, when I'm stuck on a plot point, I take a pad of paper and pen outside on my lovely deck. Often the sunshine and fresh air is exactly what I need to find a new perspective.

How do you approach starting a new book?

For historical (or what I'm calling "retro") fiction, I begin by diving into research and creating a vision board. Pictures of the dress, hairstyles, furnishings, brands, and automobiles of the era work wonders as far as stimulating ideas and the all-important "what if" questions for me. Also, I do a lot of backstory work with character development and relationship building before I begin plotting out my story. And yes, I depend on an outline. I'm not a "pantser" although I allow my outline to breathe and deviate, if you will.

What's your favorite genre to read?

I love historical fiction but also dabble in mystery and suspense. For nonfiction, I enjoy biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs as well as historical books. And let's not forget my background. I read plays including Shakespeare and books about theater craft.

Have you always wanted to write?

Not really. During the late 1980s and through the 2000s, I did write and publish academic articles, as part of my teaching career, but never considered writing a book. I didn't have much faith in my writing. It wasn't until I wrote my dissertation, "A History of the Young People's Theater at Center Stage, Baltimore, Maryland: 1963-1984" in 1999-2002 that I began to have confidence in my researching abilities and the skills involved in a larger project.

What do you do when you have writer's block?

On the rare occasion that I get writer's block (a term I really dislike), I step away from the computer. A short walk will often provide the "reset" I need to start fresh. What happens more often than writer's block to me is that I'll get stuck on how I want to express an idea/a moment/a plot point. In that case, I use a short meditation, setting the intention for clarity before I begin. This may sound strange but I can't tell you how often this has worked for me. I also use my vision boards to stimulate my thought process.

Tell us about a scene that you loved but had to edit out of your book.

My current fiction, *That Summer She Found Her Voice*, takes place in 1978. Early drafts included an epilogue that jumped ahead 15 years with the intention of showing the reader how the protagonist had progressed. After continuing to revise and strengthen the entire book, a beta reader recommended cutting the epilogue. At first I was shocked! But after reviewing from a fresh perspective and an open mind, I realized that the epilogue was no longer needed.

Do you like reading the same type of books you write?

Yes but my reading interests are very broad.

Do write under a pen name? If so, tell us about how you chose it.

No pen name for me.

How do you choose your book's title(s)?

Book titles are tough. They have to hook potential readers enough to at least get them to read the back cover blurb. I choose my titles by being thoughtful about every single word.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to write their first book?

Get it down into a first draft. Expect to write more drafts. Find honest Beta readers who are not your best friends or family members. Revise. Revise again. Understand that this is a process that is not to be rushed.

Do you do research for your books? If so, what kind of research?

Yes because my novels are historically based fiction so research is required. That research may take the form of online searches, library archives, historical society visits, site visits, and/or interviews. My nonfiction, *Collaborative Stage Directing*, is a text that required a survey questionnaire sent to experts in the field to gather data as well as secondary source research on communication and leadership skills that I then applied to the craft of directing.

How do you fit writing into your everyday life?

I'm in the delightful life position where my time is my own. Still, for the sake of self-discipline, I need to schedule blocks of time specially devoted to writing. Do Not Disturb, Please!

How do you approach writing characters?

I believe my background as an actor, director, and playwright has helped me immensely with writing characters. When I performed professionally, I was known as a character actor – playing a wide range of roles with different accents and backgrounds. This training has been invaluable in my writing.

How do you approach "world building?"

I have a template that I have created by combining elements from several templates found online. I pulled the elements that made the most sense for my genre. Additionally, I utilize vision boards, word lists, character backstory creation, and other tools, depending on my current story. I'm a big believer in putting in what I call "the headwork."

How do you handle criticism?

I prefer to think of it as constructive feedback, since the word "criticism" has such a negative vibe. I'm open to hearing constructive feedback from other authors, publishers, and my editor, of course. My method in dealing with feedback is to reflect on it for a few days and then return to the manuscript to decide if a change is needed and what is the best way to implement it.

Describe your perfect character.

Whether reading or writing, I love a character who is quirky, slightly flawed, maybe rudderless, but trying to get it together and find a path.

Tell me about your current work.

My latest fiction in my Retro series is *Navigating Her Next Chapter: A Retro Novel*. It's the sequel (although it can be read as a standalone) to *That Summer She Found Her Voice*, where readers will continue to follow Margie Stevens' career and personal journey. It takes place a few years later from 1981 through 1983 as she tackles New York City. She befriends a cross-section of interesting characters while exploring career options in the The Big Apple and faces some difficult life challenges along the way. It reads as if the TV series "Friends" was set in 1980s NYC. *Navigating Her Next Chapter: A Retro Novel* will be published by Apprentice House Press in the Spring of 2026.

My debut novel was retro themed and very close to my heart. It is filled with music and self-discovery and 1970s topics that resonate even today. *That Summer She Found Her Voice: A Retro Novel* is set against a backdrop of 1970s music and tells the story of 23-year-old Margie Stevens as she pulls herself out of a heartbreak-induced depression and begins a journey of discovery. Clarifying her views on emerging feminism, social injustice, and spirituality - all while touring across the country with King Video's Swing Band – Margie finally finds the courage to face her fears and use her authentic voice.

Tell me about your main character.

Margie is in a vulnerable place when readers meet her in book one, *That Summer She Found Her Voice*. She is bright and talented but hasn't developed her inner strength or belief in herself. At 23, she is still influenced by her parents' values, afraid to assert her own opinions or make her own decisions.

In book two, readers see a stronger Margie but she will face extremely challenging situations in an already challenging environment: New York City circa early 1980s. The question will be how a young woman from a small town on Maryland's Eastern Shore will navigate this unfamiliar terrain.

Would book clubs like your books?

Absolutely. Themes of voicelessness, racial intolerance, and questions about religion during the late 1970s that continue to be relevant today found in *That Summer She Found Her Voice* have been popular with book clubs. In fact, I've included Topics for Discussion in the back of the book. *Navigating Her Next Chapter: A Retro Novel* also offers book clubs great starting points for discussions with its themes of fear of change, stressful family dynamics, challenges of addiction, overcoming a friend's death, establishing independence. My hope is that both of these novels become a catalyst for conversation.

Would you want your book made into a film or TV Series?

Who wouldn't? Similar to Tom Hanks' *That Thing You Do* movie and even the new *Daisy Jones and the Six* television series, a film version of *That Summer She Found Her Voice* would give audiences a retro backstage peek at the touring world but with the addition of the coming-of-age story of a young woman. There are so many great visual elements in this book that would lend themselves to film, such as the way the band travels, the beauty of the U.S., the various band venues as well as Margie's hometown on the Maryland's Eastern Shore and the band's headquarters in Baltimore's Little Italy neighborhood. Plus, the book has an intriguing criminal subplot but...spoilers!

And I could picture *Navigating Her Next Chapter: A Retro Novel* as a limited TV/cable series with its vintage New York City landmarks like the Greenwich Village clubs, neighborhood diners and cafes, Off Off Broadway theaters, and the iconic Radio City Music Hall. All I need is an agent to make me those deals, right?