

# A BSB Interview With Lesléa Newman

by Connie Ward, Bold Strokes Books Consulting Publicist

August 1, 2009

## What made you decide to become a fiction writer?

I started out as a poet, and then one day I lost my job and went to a psychic and asked her what kind of job I should look for. She said, "You don't need to find a job. You need to go home and get to work." I wrote the first 20 pages of my first novel, *Good Enough To Eat*, that day and never looked back.

## What type of stories do you write? And why?

I write the type of stories I want to read: stories about contemporary lesbians and their (our) lives. It's so important for us to see ourselves portrayed in literature. It's very validating to write these types of stories; I hope readers find them very validating to read.

## What do your family/friends think about your writing?

You'd have to ask them!

## Where do you get your ideas?

A writer I know answers this question by saying, "I go to the idea store." I wish I knew where that was! Even though I've written so many books, I have a very hard time coming up with ideas. Sometimes ideas come from things I've experienced, sometimes from stories I've heard, sometimes from newspaper articles. When I consciously seek an idea I'll read a great deal—mostly poetry—which I find very inspiring. And when I'm very, very lucky, an idea will come to me in a dream.

-continue page 2-



**Order Bold Strokes Books from these Distributors:**  
Perseus.....800 343-4499      Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100  
Ingram.....800 937-8000  
Direct from BellaDistribution 800 533-1973



# **A BSB Interview With Lesléa Newman**

[www.BoldStrokesBooks.com](http://www.BoldStrokesBooks.com)

**Page 2**

## **How do you write; do you plan everything out or just write?**

I never plan or outline. I subscribe to the spelunker school of writing. It's like I'm in a dark cave and I'm wearing one of those hats with a headlight on it. All I can see is where to put my foot—or my pen—next. Once I take that step, all I can see is where to put my foot—or my pen—next. And it just keeps going like that. I was once on a panel and the question was asked: "Do you know the end before you begin?" Another writer said, "Of course. Otherwise I wouldn't know how to start." I said, "Of course not. If I knew how it was going to end, why would I bother writing it?" Like the reader, I like to be surprised.

## **What makes *The Reluctant Daughter* special to you?**

It's the grand mother/daughter novel I've always wanted to write. And I feel that I grew a lot as a writer with this novel. Many of my previous novels and short stories relied on humor. And while this book does have a great deal of humor in it, it is also emotionally raw in some spots. The humor doesn't mask the emotion. I also think I used language in a more conscientious way. I'm very pleased with the book as a whole and hope readers will be, too.

## **How much of yourself and the people you know are in your characters?**

The book is a work of fiction. It should not be taken as memoir. That said, there is a gorgeous Jewish femme in it who bears a certain resemblance to me.

## **Which lesbian authors inspired you the most? Do you have a favorite of this author(s)?**

I am indebted to so many lesbian authors whose work has been a joy and a comfort to read over so many years. Joan Nestle, Judy Grahn, Pat Parker, Jewelle Gomez, Chrystos, Becky Birtha, Susan Stinson, Sarah Schulman, Dorothy Allison, Alison Bechdel. The list goes on and on.

-continue page 3-

# A BSB Interview With Lesléa Newman

[www.BoldStrokesBooks.com](http://www.BoldStrokesBooks.com)

Page 3

## Do you have any suggestions for new writers?

Write, write, write! Make it your daily practice.

Read as much as you can.

Find a writing group and be open to feedback.

Send your work out.

Never give up!

## When you're not writing what do you do for fun?

I love going to plays, movies, art exhibits, poetry readings.

I'm addicted to crossword puzzles. I love to work in the garden. Most of all, I love hanging out with the butch of my dreams and doing anything at all. We've been together for 21 years. Had our commitment ceremony in 1989 and our legal marriage in 2004. I'm a very lucky girl!

## What is the favorite among the books/stories you've written? Why?

This is a tough question to answer. *The Reluctant Daughter* is very close to my heart, as is *Nobody's Mother*, my latest book of poetry. Also *Hachiko Waits*, which is a novel for dog lovers of all ages, based on Japan's famous Akita. Then there's my short story, "A Letter to Harvey Milk," which has been turned into a play, a movie, and been anthologized all over the place. And of course, how could I not mention *Heather Has Two Mommies*? But really, my favorite book is the one I've yet to write.



**Order Bold Strokes Books from these Distributors:**  
Perseus.....800 343-4499      Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100  
Ingram.....800 937-8000  
Direct from BellaDistribution 800 533-1973

