

## Author Janet Fish explores new 'Waters' by Nathan Oravec | Staff Writer

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Janet Fish stands on the verge of her next harrowing escapade: Book reviews.

"I don't really like cold photos," the Frederick author mentioned in advance of the media's presence at her book release luncheon last month. "They make me nervous."

It should be noted here that Fish's former job as a U.S. Sea Marshal immediately following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks required her to leap from one moving ship to another in the middle of the night. During a storm. In winter. And loaded with 60 pounds of gear.

"We referred to it as 'the jump,'" Fish says, with the slightest miscalculation between the jumper, the boats, the captain and the cold waves below proving potentially fatal; "a huge propeller sucking you in like a blender."

Clearly, she has a way with words.

That particular Jack Ryan-worthy action-sequence opens her new thriller, "7-14 Days: Our Time is at Hand," written under the pen name Noah Waters. The book was released on Dec. 1 by the Frederick-based Willison & Fish Publishing, LLC, a company founded by the author and her business partner Sue Willison.

Before she was a novelist, though, Fish served as a sheriff's deputy in Mississippi where she was raised, and then briefly as reservist for the U.S. Coast Guard. Very briefly. Looking to earn money for a master's degree, she had enlisted on Sept. 10, 2001. And then the world changed.

The thriller, Fish's first, focuses on the sea marshals, a specialized group of U.S. guardians about which she says little is known. Fish was one of only two female marshals appointed to the San Francisco Bay after the attacks, serving as team leader for a number of preventative boardings on passenger vessels, cargo carriers and container ships entering the U.S.

"Ordinary people were asked to do extraordinary things during a time of crisis," says Fish, who would later work in Washington, D.C., helping develop protocol for current maritime safety and security teams, before transitioning to civilian employment with the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

"The country realized everything had to be covered. A lot of reservists were reactivated, especially those with law enforcement background ...It resulted in the creation of a lot of positions that hadn't existed before. There wasn't really a strategy."

According to the author, the novel's fictional suspense surrounds factual threats our nation still faces today.

"I had a lot of pressure from a lot of different folks who had heard me at speaking engagements," says Fish. "They said this is a story the country needs to hear."

With the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks approaching, Fish realized the book's time, too, was at hand.

"There are still a lot of security issues to keep in mind," she says. "If [the attack is] not totally forgotten, it has been taken out of our eyesight, for lack of a better term."

In addition to spinning an engaging maritime suspense story, Fish hopes that "7-14 Days" raises some important questions about what we, as a country, can do to protect our cities and our shores.

"A lot of people who have read the book have told me that after the last chapter, they just sat and thought," she says of the tale, which begins about a month prior to Sept. 11 and stretches from the southern coastline north, slowly unfolding into Washington, D.C.

"It's a story I think people will find fascinating."

Although already equipped with a maritime-ready surname, Fish wrote as Noah Waters because she thought the name "flowed" better with the book's theme.

"The biggest thing that I've [noticed at signings] is that people are expecting a man," she says.

"They're like, 'Hey, you're a woman,'" she laughs. "'Well, yes, last time I checked.'"

Fish says the most difficult part of the writing process was putting her military career into layman's terms.

"It was very clear in my internal mind, but it was very difficult to convey," she says. "Over the past 10 years, so much terminology has become commonplace to me. My editor would send the manuscript back and say, 'What is this? 'What is an aft? What's Jacob's Ladder? The hound – where is that?'"

Fish's writing experience prior to penning "7-14 Days" was limited.

"Nothing polished, certainly," she says. "In high school, I belonged to the newspaper. In college, you write different articles. All of mine were about freedom."

It seems that undying ideal is a steadfast theme in the author's life.

"I'm very passionate about America," she says. "This country is such a jewel, even during the hard times."

A portion of the book's sales will benefit Tuesday's Children, an organization founded to support children who lost a parent during the 9/11 attacks.

[www.willison-fish.com](http://www.willison-fish.com)