

‘Sex and the City’ author talks about women, writing

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By Sue Mayfield Geiger



Courtesy photo

Here's reason to raise your cosmopolitans and kick up your Manolo Blahniks. "Sex and the City" author Candace Bushnell will be the keynote speaker at this year's Galveston's Women Conference. The conference, set for April 5 at the Moody Gardens Convention Center, also will include cosmopolitans — a cocktail introduced to a new generation of drinkers by "Sex and the City" HBO TV series — a fashion show, notable speakers, a book signing and KPRC-TV anchor Dominique Sachse as Mistress of Ceremonies and more.

Coast caught up with Bushnell to discuss her successful writing career. Success didn't come easy. At age 33, Bushnell was sleeping on a block of foam because she couldn't afford a mattress, she said. A few years later, she was

writing for the *New York Observer* when managers asked her to write a column called "Sex and the City." It was the magic bullet that eventually led to a book deal, HBO television series and subsequent feature films all based on the column.

Growing up in Glastonbury, Conn., with two sisters, Bushnell produced her own fiction by age 8. She became fascinated with the feminist movement and wanted to be a part of that world, she said. After college, she survived her "hard knock" years while advancing her writing career. Today, Bushnell 54, is still blonde and beautiful, and busy writing her eighth novel. She's come a long way since her early days as a struggling writer. Her books include: "Sex and the City," "4 Blondes," "Trading Up," "Lipstick

Jungle,” “One Fifth Avenue,” “The Carrie Diaries” and “Summer and the City.” Film and television include: “Sex and the City,” “Lipstick Jungle,” “The Broadroom,” “Sex and the City II” and “The Carrie Diaries.” She divides her time between her Manhattan apartment and country home in Connecticut, which she shares with her two parti-colored standard poodles, Pepper and Prancer.

Q: What did you read growing up?

A: A lot of Roald Dahl and just about anything I could get my hands on. I knew that I wanted to be a writer at a very young age.

Q: So, how did a Connecticut gal like you end up going to Rice University and did you visit Galveston while in college?

A: My father went to Rice and since I’d live in Connecticut my whole life, I thought it’d be neat to live in another part of the country. But after three semesters, I took off for New York where I got a job waitressing, but I was really bad at it. So, I started writing and selling articles. Yes, I went to Galveston beach often, which I loved. I’m looking forward to coming back — I always thought it was a cool place.

Q: How did you come up with the name Carrie Bradshaw for your main character, and how did you feel about Sarah Jessica Parker being cast?

A: It just popped into my head one day while sitting at my computer. I really didn’t agonize about the name. I love Sarah and the young Carrie as well, actress AnnaSophia Robb.

Q: For those not familiar with “The Carrie Diaries” (prequel to “Sex and the City”), explain the nuances of the young Carrie and how she becomes the savvy, independent grown-up Carrie.

A: I drew a lot from my own experiences and it’s basically a journey. The younger Carrie wants more, learns to think for herself, and takes action to become the writer she’s always wanted to be.

Q: Today’s young women are more confident and resilient than ever. What do you attribute that to?

A: Many factors. In the last 30 years, women have been able to look at their lives in a different way. Young women today have grown up around independent mothers, so they have learned by example. Also, sexual harassment issues have declined. They used to be a part of your day — on the subway, walking down the street; it was a steady barrage of comments. We’ve all become so much more aware of this and are standing up to it, plus there are laws in place now.

Q: Clothes define Carrie but do they define you? I’ve heard you don’t like to shop, so what’s in your wardrobe?

A: It’s not important to define yourself by the clothes you wear when you get older. There are more important ways to do that. Most of the time, I’m in jeans and a sweater.

Q: Does it upset you when television and film stray from your written word?

A: No. They are completely different mediums. A book and a TV series could not be more opposite. With TV, they need a script every 10 days and there are hundreds of people involved.

Q: What time do you jump-start your day and how long do you write?

A: I like to get up at sunrise and there are times when I get up at 4 a.m. Half the time, I don’t know what I’m going to write that day. It’s a process of writing and rewriting. Some days I write four to six pages; other days 25 pages.

Q: You’ve been quoted as saying that success is more frightening than failure. Can you elaborate?

A: Success can put you in a different place with people and it changes your relationship with the world. People are often envious of

your success or they want to be your new best friend.

Q: Carrie has three gal pals. Who are yours?

A: I have lots of gal pals; some are similar to Carrie's three friends. I have guy pals too and I often ask their opinions about my male characters.

Q: Do you identify more with Carrie or one of her three friends?

A: Carrie. She's my alter ego.

Q: Of Carrie's three friends, which one would you turn to with a problem?

A: All of them.

Q: Do you have a new man in your life? Can we talk about that?

A: We could if I did, but I don't. I'm recently divorced and haven't even gone on a date. I'm not really looking and just enjoying a break. I feel pretty good where I'm at right now.

Q: Plastic surgery: yes or no?

A: I've thought about plastic surgery, but I don't have the guts. I'm going to wait until they perfect it a bit more.

Q: You've said that every city has a Carrie Bradshaw. How do they reveal themselves?

A: There are always a few gals who come up and say to me, 'I'm the Carrie Bradshaw of (blank) — wherever I'm speaking. And that goes for Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda, too.