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NEW NOVEL RE-EXAMINES 100-YEAR-OLD MURDER MYSTERIES

Four Family Members One by One Die Suspicious Deaths.

CHURCHVILLE, Va – August 18, 2008 - Author Jacki Howard never intended to write a book. In fact, all she planned to do was some family research. But the information she uncovered and the questions she raised were too good to keep to herself. The result - her first novel, *The Thumb Pointed Fingers*.

“I started out writing down the things I’d been told as a child – the stories that had been passed down to me. Then I did some digging to find facts. With each new piece of information I uncovered, I became convinced that this story needed to be told,” said Howard.

The story involved Howard’s relatives who lived and farmed in the early 1900s in the rural area of Michigan known as “The Thumb.” John Wesley Sparling, a distant cousin to Howard, married Carrie Boddy and together they had five children. Sparling’s tragic death in 1908 was mourned by the small close-knit community. But sadness quickly turned to suspicion as three of his grown children followed him to the grave in only three years.

Says Howard, “The incredible thing about the case is that the deaths just kept happening – this isn’t a case where a family is murdered in their sleep overnight, these people died one by one in a very short time period– each one dying in a similar manner. Each one dying a painful and prolonged death.”

The mystery was referred to as “The Case of the Dying Sparlings”. And while it did occur in small-town America, news of the murders spread throughout the country, even prompting several articles in *The Washington Post*. By piecing together oral history, court records, medical reports and other documents, Howard retells the story of the Dying Sparlings. “I had so many preconceived notions about what actually happened,” says Howard “it wasn’t until I started my research that I realized that the case was not at all clear-cut and truly is a mystery.”

At the 100th anniversary of John Wesley Sparling’s death, Howard hopes that her new book can bring some closure to the family of the four who died. “I am convinced that somewhere out there, someone knows what really took place,” says Howard.

Jacki Howard’s book, *The Thumb Pointed Fingers* will be released on August 20, 2008. In addition, Mrs. Howard will be returning to the Thumb to sign books and field questions. More information can be found at www.dyingsparlings.com.

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