

## And then I read your book

Books can change—and even save—lives. Author [Cindy Gerard](#) writes romantic suspense novels featuring veterans as lead characters. She does her best to make their struggles as realistic as possible, because she knows a sympathetic portrait can mean the difference between life and death for some of her readers.

### A conversation with Cindy Gerard

#### How have your books affected fans?

**Cindy Gerard:** One of my most poignant ones was I got a letter—an email one day. I have a little trouble talking about it, because I still get so emotional about it. It was a young man. And he was over in Iraq. And he was there, at that time, as a private contractor. He worked in the motor pool. And he said that the reason he emailed me was because he had picked up my book, *To the Edge*. And it was my very first Bodyguard book. And the hero of that book was a former Ranger, U.S. Army Airborne Ranger with a huge alcohol issue. And he had pretty much dropped out when this book starts. And he was forced by circumstances to come back and help some people out. And he does it all kicking and screaming. And anyway, he had a lot of flashback issues. He had PTSD.

And so he said, “Anyway, I was over here. And I want to tell you. I came over here to die.” He said, “I had done two tours as a Marine. And I got really messed up in the head.” What he’d seen, what he’d done. And he said, “I came back each time. Life at home was worse each time. I got into drinking. I got into drugs.

I lost my wife. I lost everything. And I wasn't good for anything. And I decided I would just go back and die over there, because I don't want to live like this." And he said, "And then I read your book." Yeah. You talk about a heart rendering moment. He said, "Your book and this hero—." Nolan Garret was the hero's name. He said, "He and I could have been brothers. I felt, when I read what happened to him and how he felt, that was me." And he said, "And I kept reading that book. And I kept reading that book. And each page I turned, I felt better. And I thought this woman—this is a real person. And this is me. This has happened to me." And him and I are still now—I'm happy to say he is back. He's getting married this summer [...]

[...] it's what made me realize how careful I have to be when I write my books. I cannot pay lip service to what these people go through, and it's just very important that the stories I tell are reflective of the people who live those lives, because there are people out there with parallel lives. So that was pretty powerful. That's been a driving force for me.

When has your life been deeply affected by a book? The life of someone you know?

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