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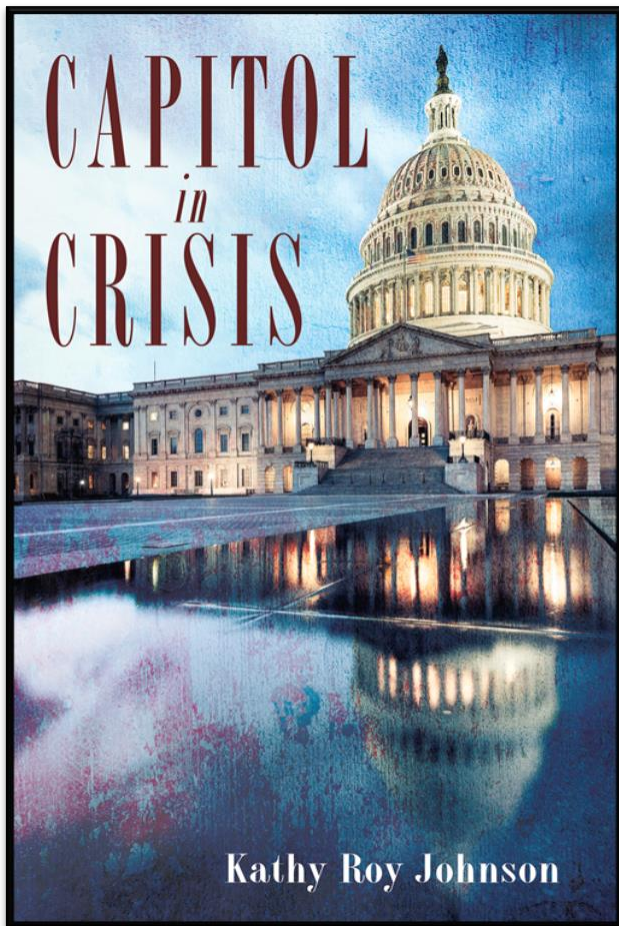
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Capitol in Crisis

by Kathy Roy Johnson
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New Title from Kathy Roy Johnson *Capitol in Crisis*



Simone Perez, Architect of the Capitol, is stunned when a terrible explosion rocks the capitol, totally collapsing the tunnel which connects the House and Senate Chambers and trapping several people. Simone promptly assembles an interagency committee to help her assess the damage to the capitol and develop a strategy to rescue survivors. She also assumes responsibility for briefing the press, making her job even more daunting.

As the story unfolds, members of the committee work together to find survivors and bring them to safety. We meet several true-to-life characters like Addie Hutchison, the proprietor of the underground café; Fire Chief Earl Bentsen, who recognizes that time is of the essence; and Rob Tate, a skinny maintenance worker who realizes that he can reach the café as well as the mechanical room by crawling through an old vent space. Through several twists and turns, Simone maintains a steady hand, aided by the Speaker of the House, John McIntyre, who finds her very attractive. Although it seems an impossible task, one by one, victims reunite with their families.

Kathy Roy Johnson worked for a US Senator for three years in the mid-1970s. Thereafter, she worked as a lobbyist for United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. before joining the federal government as congressional liaison. She retired in 2015 and lives in Silver Spring, MD with her husband, Ed, and their beagle/basset hound, Jake.



Interview with Kathy Roy Johnson

How did the idea for this book come about?

I had the idea for this book about fifteen years ago. This stubborn idea that just would not go away. I made a few feeble attempts at a 'first draft' several years ago, but I was still working so it was impossible to do any serious writing. After I retired in 2015, I began a serious attempt at writing what is now *Capitol in Crisis*.

Is there really a café under the U.S. Capitol?

Yes, a labyrinth of tunnels which connects the House and Senate sides of the Hill. This provides a shortcut for busy staffers who often must race from a hearing on the House side to a meeting on the Senate side. There was a small canteen style sandwich shop located in one of these tunnels just under the Capitol. I have taken poetic license and turned it into a decidedly tiny café.

Where did you get the idea for Addie?

Addie Hutchison is a composite of women I met over the years who serve in Senate Food Services. I soon made friends with the women who worked in Senate food services. These women worked hard yet were always cheerful and usually knew what you wanted—even before you did! Most importantly, they were always willing to help. (Since I have some balance problems due to cerebral palsy, I was grateful for their kind assistance.) I created Addie with these women in mind.

You seem to have a working knowledge of Capitol Hill. Did you work there?

I am a Federal retiree who had the privilege to work in and around Capitol Hill for thirty-eight years, first as a Research Assistant to a U.S. Senator, then as a lobbyist for United Cerebral Palsy for seven years. The remainder of my career I spent as a Congressional Liaison for two small Federal agencies the National Council on Disability and the U.S. Access Board respectively. Thus, I've spent a good deal of time knocking around the Hill.

Who is the main character in the story? How did this come about?

Simone Perez, Architect of the Capitol, is the main character in *Capitol in Crisis*. She deftly leads us through the story's twists and turns. She is professionally competent, thorough, and uncompromising. Yet, for all her strengths, Simone is emotionally vulnerable. When I first began writing this story, I envisioned Father Dan Larson being the main character. As the story progressed, Simone's strength and determination coupled with her ability to move the story along, clearly made her the main character.

When writing this story, did you ever feel like giving up? What kept you writing?

I felt like giving up dozens of times!! Sometimes I'd hit a brick wall with a scene or a character wasn't developing as I'd hoped. My friend Carol—who supported me throughout this process—would talk me out of a tree. I'd take some time off and think about the problem. Invariably, I'd return to the scene with a fresh perspective. I also think that sometimes—characters and scenes almost write themselves. Meaning that, sometimes, a character or scene takes shape easily without much thought while other scenes or characters require agonizing effort. I don't know what other writers experience, but that was my experience with *Capitol in Crisis*.

You have some knowledge of architecture; how did that come about?

I worked for the U.S Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (better known as the Access Board) for twenty-four years. The Access Board develops Federal accessibility guidelines and standards built environment, transportation, communication, and information technology. I followed legislation, wrote several major policies, and assisted with numerous public hearings and out-of-town events. These meetings often involved representatives of the American Institute of Architecture and those advocating for an accessible built environment.

Who is *Capitol in Crisis* intended to reach?

I suppose *Capitol in Crisis* will interest two groups. The first may be those who work on or are interested in Capitol Hill. The second group who may find this book of interest will be persons of faith, especially those who are interested in how this impacts the formulation of public policy. This may also be of interest to Church book clubs.

An Excerpt from *Capitol in Crisis*

Prologue

Far below the U.S. Capitol, there is a sub-basement, with bare cast-iron pipes in the ceiling and exposed brick painted a drab institutional yellow. Dusty old boxes containing long forgotten reports line the hallway, awaiting their demise. An elevator shaft stands at one end of the hall, unused for decades. Abandoned desks and mismatched chairs add to the clutter. No one frequents this hallway, with the exception of a few maintenance men who require access to the mechanical room. The other end of this hallway adjoins a larger corridor leading to a small café about fifty feet away. Well known for its superb coffee, this little café has only a handful of tables and decidedly limited seating. Like the old boxes and furniture, it seems out of place. Nevertheless, for busy Congressional staffers and an occasional member of Congress, it offers solace, its gentle proprietor a welcome respite from the rough-and-tumble world of politics.

Recently, the Maintenance Department designed and installed a new electrical system in the mechanical room to improve the heating system of the Capitol. Considered a minor change, only a handful of workers even know about the installation of this new system. It should be a simple thing to accomplish. The crew chuckled at the notion that management felt it would take two full days to install the new system.

“It’s a minor change.” they argued. “We’ll be finished in half a day. Nothing to it.”

Yet even minor changes can sometimes have unintended consequences.

Praise for *Capitol in Crisis*

“Kathy Johnson takes us deep into the underground of the US capitol in this riveting novel but anyone who has worked, visited, or wanted to be there will instantly get some sense of the place and the people there. There are disasters aplenty in our nation’s capitol but this is about one that is not political but very real and haunting. A wonderful read.”

—**Mike McCurry, former White House Press Secretary and US Senate staffer, and Director/Professor, Center for Public Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary**

“The dialogue and character development are truly authentic. . . . Anyone fascinated by DC and the capitol and anyone also desirous of knowing what the ‘hoi polloi’ who serve the power brokers experience and feel every day will enjoy this book.”

—**James J. Londis, former Director, Washington Institute of Contemporary Issues**

“Kathy Johnson arrested my attention from the opening paragraphs of this lively and informative work and kept it to the end. Her attention to details, in particular the intricate configuration of the tunnels that crisscross like spaghetti under the capitol building, is compelling on its own but, more importantly, adds authenticity to the author’s grasp of her subject. Kathy’s portrayal of the emotional and power interplay between the leading characters is both subtle and revealing. Also, one will not miss the delicate manner in which she validates disability and demonstrates that it is no hindrance to personal fulfillment, normality, and the capacity to help others. This is a book that I will come back to from time to time.”

—**Don W. McFarlane, Pastor for Administration, Sligo SDA Church**

