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Andy Andrews Interview: Latest Book 'The Heart Mender' Exposes Little Known Nazi Warfare in the Gulf of Mexico

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Written by: [Melissa Parker](#) [visit my website](#)

Hailed by *The New York Times* as a “modern-day Will Rogers who has quietly become one of the most influential people in America,” Andy Andrews is an internationally known speaker and novelist whose combined works have sold millions of copies worldwide.

Andrews' best-selling book, *The Traveler's Gift: Seven Decisions that Determine Personal Success*, remained on *The New York Times* bestseller list for four and a half months and has been translated into nearly 20 languages. *The Noticer*, based on the remarkable story of Andrews' own life, succeeded tremendously in furthering his prevailing message of finding hope in the face of adversity.

“In Boca Raton on May 4, 1942, right in the broad daylight and in view of the sunbathers on the beach, a U-boat came up and sunk a freighter, then turned and sunk a cargo vessel.”

The Birmingham, Alabama native's newest book, *The Heart Mender*, elegantly blends a riveting story with a powerful message of hope, and an exciting quest for the truth that begins with the author himself finding German artifacts in his own backyard.

Andrews lives in Orange Beach, Alabama with his wife Polly and their two sons.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): You have said that *The Heart Mender* is your favorite book.

Andy Andrews: This is the favorite thing I've ever written. I think part of it is because of the surprise. It wasn't anything that I really intended. Then finding that stuff on the gulf coast started a search for why in the world those artifacts were hidden along the Gulf Coast in the United States of America. The more I researched and the more I got into the story the more excited I was about it. I just think the story is awesome and to this day, the ending of the book blows me away.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): What ran through your mind when you found the can containing the artifacts buried in your backyard?



Andy Andrews (Photo by Peter Nash)

Andy Andrews: Well, I didn't recognize the button, but obviously saw the swastika on the Knight's Cross. Then going through the pictures I was pretty sure that guy in the corner of the photo was Hitler (laughs). I ran for the computer and started working on what this was and pretty quickly found evidence that most people still don't know – Nazi submarines were operating for well over a year in American waters during World War II.

In the book I detail all of the research I did so that people can duplicate it and find the information on the Internet. Nazi submarines were all in the Gulf of Mexico and up and down the east coast. Before Hitler called them back they sunk over 800 American vessels in American waters, killing over 9,000 people. So when you think about it, that is a direct attack from another nation on our nation, the body count was higher than 9-1-1, and nobody knows about it, which is pretty odd.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): I guess the government covered it up to prevent widespread panic.

Andy Andrews: Yes they did and obviously without television or the Internet that was easier to do then than it would be now. But, you know, my wife said, "Ask the old people." Still to this day there are people in their 80s who lived along the Gulf Coast or along the Atlantic Coast who very clearly remember it. That was a part of their everyday lives for a while with bodies and cargo washing up on the beaches.

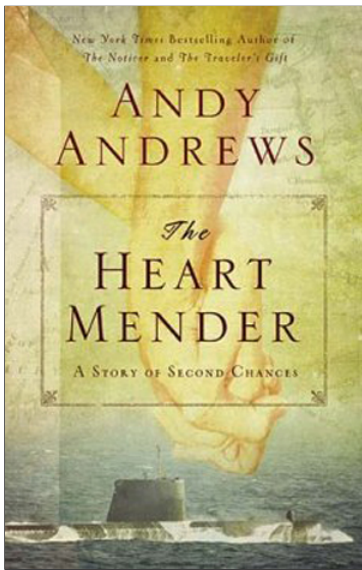
In Boca Raton on May 4, 1942, right in the broad daylight and in view of the sunbathers on the beach, a U-boat came up and sunk a freighter, then turned and sunk a cargo vessel. The explosions roared over the beach and panicked people. That happened right in broad daylight in front of hundreds of witnesses. Yet today we still don't know about it.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): There was also a mention in the book about a spy being shot and killed at Fort Morgan, a historic fort at the mouth of Mobile Bay. Did you research further into that claim?

Andy Andrews: Yeah, I did a lot of research into that also. I was actually amazed at how many spies in the United States were arrested during that time. It's just a lost part of our history.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): My family visited the area for years. Back in the 1960s cottages were built in the dunes and the owners all had private beaches.

Andy Andrews: Many of the families during the 40s patrolled the beach at night. One family would patrol a two-mile section for two hours, and then another family would take over. They did this for years there looking for U-boats because they knew.



They were looking for people coming ashore, which as you know, is the story of *The Heart Mender*. It's a story about one of the officers who considered himself a German (not a Nazi). When they were in close one night being refueled, he was betrayed by the political officer and wounded. He made his way ashore and was found by Helen, the young American war widow whose husband had just been killed in Germany not too long before.

Helen finds him and sees that German uniform, is horrified, and almost kills him with her bare hands. Then the ultimate story, and obviously I won't reveal the plot, is about how she changes her mind very quickly and decides to hide him. The whole story of *The Heart Mender* is the story of how they hide in 1942 small town America, why they hid, and what happened ultimately because of it.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): The book is also about the power of forgiveness. I thought it was interesting that Danny was instrumental in getting Helen to forgive Josef although Danny had no idea of the situation.

Andy Andrews: Right, he didn't even know what was going on. Yet this young man with Down's Syndrome could sense her anguish and bitterness. With very honest language Danny was able to convey a truth to her that really turns out to be the theme of the book. *The Heart Mender* has this theme of forgiveness all the way through it. I've been very happy at how the book has been received and how people love the story, but also how they have been affected by that theme of forgiveness.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): You mentioned your wife saying, "Ask the old people." She also was able to identify the child in the photo as a little girl. Is your wife always so wise?

Andy Andrews: You know, my wife is incredibly intuitive. It used to bug me because I would think, "How can you say that, how do you know that?" But through the years (we've been married 21) I have learned that I ignore her intuition at my peril (laughs). She is right so often that maybe this degree of women's intuition is just unique to my wife, but it is definitely there.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): There are plans for *The Heart Mender* to come to the big screen.

Andy Andrews: Yeah, the papers have already been signed. I don't know a timetable or anything, but we have already optioned the movie rights and people are very excited about it.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): I've decided who should play Josef and Helen.

Andy Andrews: Tell me.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): I'm thinking Ernest Borgnine and Gena Rowlands.

Andy Andrews: That would be awesome!

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): You have recently caused an international incident with a "soccer" comment. I read about it on your blog.

Andy Andrews: It's pretty funny to me. I write blogs and articles on andyandrews.com and they're free to anyone. Some of them are funny and some are more thoughtful.

I was on MSNBC a couple of weeks ago talking about the oil spill and I made some innocuous comment about soccer. It's funny because the subject was BP and the oil spill. This one little comment I made about soccer really inflamed this soccer base that is evidently out there (laughs). It was all in good fun, but with all of our serious talk, it was funny to me that somebody would get bent out of shape about me saying, "I didn't think anybody was that interested in soccer."

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): Andy, is there a clean up going on right now at Orange Beach?

Andy Andrews: Well, I think there are different opinions on that. There's the media's opinion about the clean up going on and then there's reality. I think many of us there are pretty disheartened at what's actually happening and how the clean up is progressing. Of course, the major thing we're all concerned about is getting it capped.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): Right. Have you noticed a big drop in tourism?

Andy Andrews: Yeah, there's a massive drop in tourism. You know, the reality is that it is awful. People are very scared. But there's another reality we have to be aware of and that is, our golf courses are still among the best in the world, our water parks are still open, our state park with its monstrous lake is open, and there's plenty to do. There are restaurants and shopping. Everything is still going on.

Even though there might be oil in places along the shoreline, the beaches still look great. I really urge people to come. I have an 8 year old and a 10 year old. They cannot remember this the rest of their lives as the summer their mom and dad lost it. We’ve got to turn this into something of value. So we’re pointing out the equal reality and that is that there are other things to do.

We do still live in a great place. We’re very hurt and upset about what is going on but this could be the summer that we turn it into something positive. People are coming from all over the world to help us in our time of need so we’re learning things we wouldn’t necessarily have chosen but they’re still valuable.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): Have they told people to stay out of the water?

Andy Andrews: In places they have. There are certain stretches of beach that are still open and people are swimming. There are certain inland waters that people use all the time and they’re still swimming and fishing there. So obviously that is a day-to-day thing where decisions are made in that area ... but we are not shutting down. I wish people around the state and country would know that and come on down.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): You tweeted a couple of photos showing the oil in the water.

Andy Andrews: Right and that’s part of that clean up conundrum we’re concerned about. We live well inland from the beach, and yet this oil that has washed up on our property came through three containment booms to get there. So, while these floating pieces of plastic may make the media and people in the middle of the country feel like everything is being done, there are many of us here that are very aware (with miles of underwater rivers of oil) a piece of plastic floating on the surface is not going to keep it out.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): Absolutely. Are you on a speaking tour now?

Andy Andrews: I am. This past week I’ve been in Nashville, Ft. Lauderdale, Dallas, Cleveland, back to Ft. Lauderdale, and then home tomorrow ... all for different organizations.

Melissa Parker (Smashing Interviews Magazine): You are a busy guy! Are you working on a new book?

Andy Andrews: Yes, coming out in August is my first children’s book called *The Boy Who Changed the World*. I read it to my 8-year-old son and he said, “Dad, that’s the best thing you’ve ever written!” Of course, he hasn’t read my other books (laughs). But, I do appreciate the sentiment.

I have another one (for adults) coming out in August called *The Butterfly Effect*. Then next spring a book that’s the sequel to *The Traveler’s Gift* will be released.

We’re very excited about everything that’s going on and certainly appreciate you helping to keep people apprised of the events. It’s always a pleasure speaking to you.

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