

Romance, She Wrote: Trenton mom puts her imagination to work on books

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Lori Bell never dreamed she would become a romance novelist. No way.

But the former newspaper reporter has learned to love it. She can stay home with her two children and pursue her passion for writing.

"It's completely my style and my imagination," she said. "No facts. No quotes."

Spinning yarns also is a release for Lori, 38, of Trenton. She faces real-life challenges with 9-year-old son Connor, who has autism. She and husband Mike also have a daughter, Bailey, 11.



"I'm not out to be famous," Lori said. "I love my life with my husband and my kids in Trenton. I don't need to be out on book tours. I just wanted to share (my stories) and see where it goes from there."

Lori self-published her first novel, "Seams," in March and its sequel, "Unraveled," in May. They're set in New York City.

The main character is a journalist whose life takes a series of twists and turns after her boyfriend gets into an auto accident.

"(Lori) is an amazing writer," said friend Jen Flanagan, 33, of New Baden. "She can really paint a picture with her words. She's up there with any author I have read."

Jen is an individual aide for Wesclin School District who formerly worked with Connor. Knowing Jen was an avid reader, Lori asked for her help with editing.

Nicholas Sparks is one of Jen's favorite authors. She describes Lori's books as "Nicholas Sparks meets 'Fifty Shades of Grey,'" combining solid storylines with steamy romance.

Lori has sold about 600 copies of "Seams" and 300 copies of "Unraveled" through amazon.com. She knows many buyers are Trenton residents.

"Self-publishing a book in a small town has been a great experience," she said. "Everybody is so happy for you, and everybody wants to help. They'll say, 'I'll buy it. I'll tell my friends about it. I'll put it on Facebook.'

"They have been so supportive. I probably would have just gotten swallowed up in a big city."

Now Lori is working on a third book, "Timing." It's not a second sequel, but the main character was briefly mentioned in "Seams."

It took Lori about two months to write each of her first two books. She usually works on a laptop while the kids are at school or in bed. Sometimes she sits on the covered back porch, overlooking the family's swimming pool.

"I think it's great," said Bailey, a student at Trenton Middle School. "(Mom) gets to do what she wants to do."

Lori earned a journalism degree at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and worked six years as education reporter for the O'Fallon Progress. She quit in 2005 to become a stay-at-home mom.

"I gave up what I thought I would do for a career," she said. "I didn't regret it, but there was a hole there. As a writer, I think you need to keep feeding that passion."

Husband Mike, 48, is an imagery analyst for the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency at Scott Air Force Base. He applauds his wife's ability to be both mom and author.

"I haven't read the books yet, but I will," he said. "Maybe this winter, when my daughter slows down with her sports. I've been doing a lot of running around with her. I coach her soccer team and her softball team."

"Seams" evolved from one of Lori's favorite lines, which she read in another book, "Fireworks Over Toccoa" by Jeffrey Stepakoff. "It was as though the seams of her life had been let out a bit," he wrote, meaning the character finally felt at peace.

Lori published her books through CreateSpace, an online Amazon company that provides authors with do-it-yourself publishing tools.

"When you self-publish through Amazon, you know exactly what the book is going to look like because it's all your work," she said. "I'm not paying anyone else to do it for me.

"I picked everything from the cover photo to the font size. The catch is, (the company gets) a large percentage of my sales."

Prices are \$9.90 for paperback or Kindle editions of "Seams" and \$10.23 for the paperback or \$9.99 for the Kindle edition of "Unraveled" at amazon.com. For more information, visit loribellauthor.com.

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