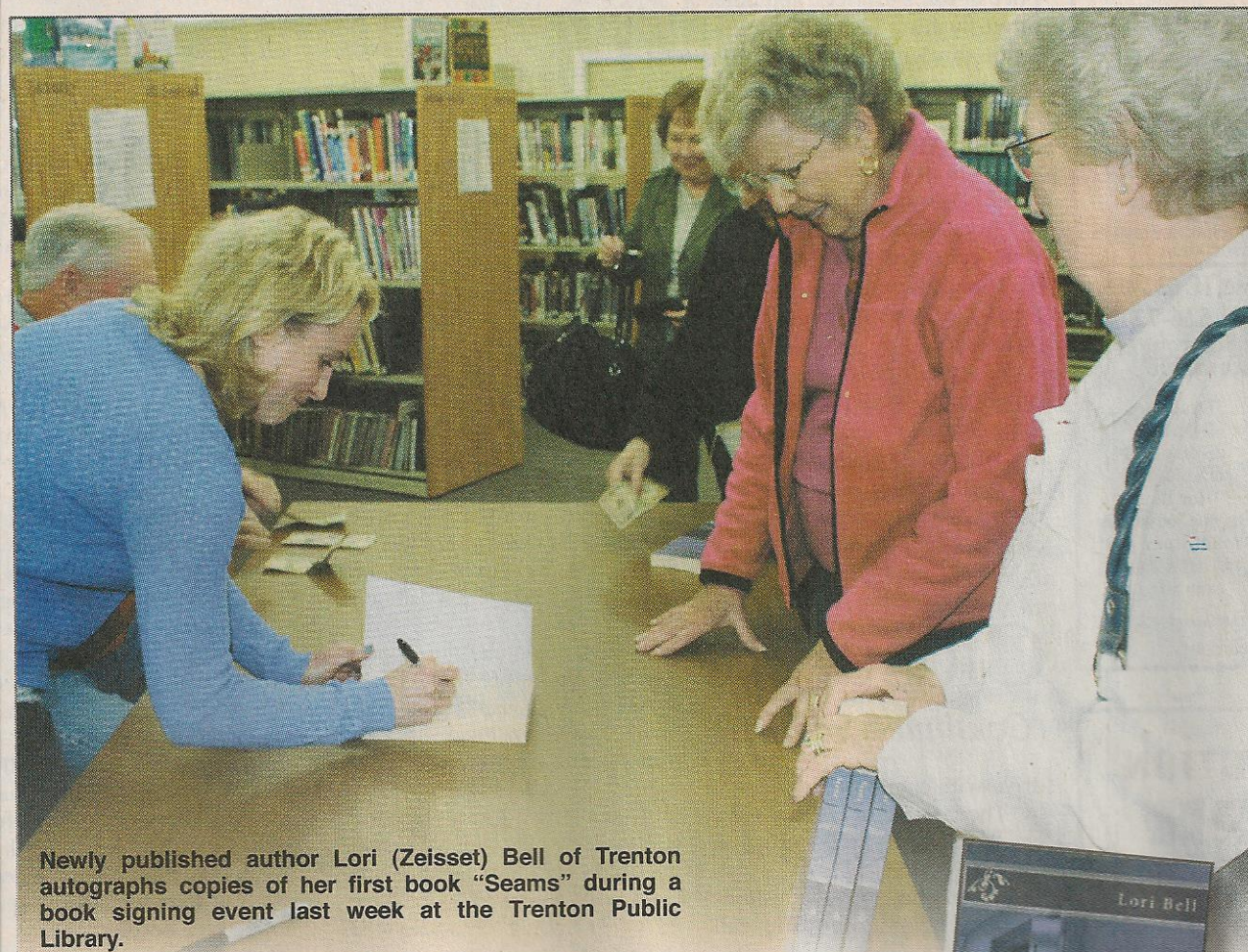


TRENTON WOMAN PUBLISHES FIRST BOOK; AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM



Newly published author Lori (Zeisset) Bell of Trenton autographs copies of her first book "Seams" during a book signing event last week at the Trenton Public Library.

'Seams' to be a hit

By Kelly Jo Ross
Breese Journal Reporter

For Trenton author Lori (Zeisset) Bell, it's all about letting the seams out.

"I think most women can relate to that," Bell, 38, said.

Bell is promoting her first book, "Seams," an easy-to-read novel intended for mature readers.

"I think people have gotten as caught up in reading the book as I did in writing it," Bell said.

Since late February, "Seams" has been available through Amazon.com (in print or Kindle edition) and the public has had an overwhelming response. In fact, they want more!

Bell always knew she wanted to be a writer. She grew up reading Danielle Steele and loves reading Jodi Picoult, Nicholas Sparks and Emily Giffin.

After graduating from Mater Dei High School in Breese, Bell received a journalism degree from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. She had worked as a full-time reporter for the education beat at the O'Fallon Progress newspaper, a sister newspaper to the Belleville News-Democrat.



Seams (Continued from 1A)

When her first child, daughter Bailey was born, Bell began working part-time, often at home, for the newspaper. Two years later, her son Connor was born.

"Connor was a high maintenance child," she said. "So, I didn't get much work done at home."

Bell then became a stay-at-home mom. Bailey was growing and thriving. However, Bell said, Connor was not where he should be, developmentally.

"He wasn't sitting up when he should be and he was throwing himself back," she said.

She and her husband Mike, who works in the Department of Defense at Scott Air Force Base, were both concerned for their son and at one point, they had up to four therapists in their home per week working with Connor.

"Connor was often regressing because of the pressure," Bell said. "He was so overwhelmed."

They were advised by Connor's developmental pediatrician to stop the therapy and for him just to go to day care at The Goddard School in Shiloh two days per week.

"He cried all of the time there," Bell said. "That was really hard for him."

By the age of 4, Connor was diagnosed with mild-to-moderate autism.

He began schooling at Trenton Elementary and then last year, he began his first year at Franklin School in Belleville, which is part of Belleville School District 118.

"Franklin is a regular grade school with general education kids," she said.

However, one wing of the school is dedicated to children in sixth-grade and under who have autism and includes teachers, therapists and aides.

"Connor has had great gains (at Franklin) but is still not ready to do what a normal 8-year-old should be doing, academically and socially," Bell said. "But, it was a way for him to be where he was and get what he needed all day long and a way for me to be me."

While Connor went to school throughout the day at Franklin and Bailey attended fifth grade at St. Mary's Elementary School in Trenton, Bell had most of the

day to herself, either grocery shopping, cleaning or reading.

"It was my time," Bell said, adding that as much as she hated sending Connor to school and hated change, it was the best situation for both of them.

"I needed to be available with time schedules for Connor because he'd get on the bus at 7 a.m. and get home by 3 p.m. So, I couldn't have a 9 to 5 job. This was his routine and if I'm not there, he reacts to that," Bell said.

Bell missed writing and after reading a novel, she was inspired to write a book.

The inspiration came from a quote from a book that she read last summer, "Fireworks Over Toccoa," by Jeffrey Stepakoff.

In the book, there is a quote that Bell couldn't get over regarding the main character: "*It was as though the seams of her life had been let out just a bit.*"

"I remember reading this quote three times and thinking, 'I could write an entire book about this,'" she said, adding that don't we all (as women) feel like this a little bit.

"I was really scared to send Connor off to school but after the kids were settled in school, I really felt that the seams were out in my life. It's a wild feeling knowing that I wrote a book about this, but I'm also really living it," she said.

Bell sat at her computer and began typing. And typing and typing. She would type for about five to six hours per day.

"I had a general idea (for the book) of a person being pulled in different directions," Bell said. "I didn't have an outline or a plan. It just came to me. It was almost like an out-of-body experience. I was so involved in the character."

In mid-August she began typing and two months later, she had finished the book. She had her friend read and edit it, encouraging her to then publish the book.

Bell then began the publishing process, through CreateSpace, a self-publishing resource through Amazon.com.

And she knew what she was going to title the book, "Seams," although joking she said that the only Seams book she knew could be a book about sewing.

In the book, New York jour-

nalist Kelsey Duncan thrives on telling other people's stories. But it is her story, her life as a woman in her late 20s, that she sometimes wishes she could rewrite. Or at least rejuvenate with passion and excitement and fulfillment.

As one friend, Jennifer Flanagan of New Baden, had stated, it's like Nicholas Sparks meets "Fifty Shades of Grey."

Except it's not so risqué, Bell added.

"It's definitely not a book that I would want anyone younger than 18 to read," Bell said.

However, she said, there has been an overwhelming response with older women.

"I think the older women really like it because it makes them feel younger," Bell said.

Bell was encouraged by friends to start a Facebook account to promote her book and the response has been great.

"Most of the promotion of the book has been word-of-mouth and Facebook," she said.

Bell held her first book signing last Wednesday at Trenton Public Library.

She said approximately 30 people showed up for the event, which was surprising, considering that the appearance was rarely advertised.

During the signing, many people asked Bell questions about the ending of the book.

"Stay tuned for the second book," Bell said.

She hopes that the sequel, "Unraveled," will be published through Amazon.com by late May, before the children are out of school.

The local response and the community support encourages her to continue.

"It's encouraging to me when people say that they couldn't put the book down," she said.

Any hints on the second book?

"Things definitely 'unravel' in the sequel, but it has a happy ending to it. I do feel like we all want a happy ending in our lives," she said, with a twinkle in her eye.

"Seams," is available on Amazon.com in either print or Kindle edition. Look for "Unraveled" to come out on Amazon.com in late May or early June.