



TRENTON AUTHOR LORI BELL signs a copy of her new novel, *Seams*, for Jen Flanagan of New Baden last Wednesday during a book-signing at the Trenton Public Library. The event was part of the library's observance of National Library Month. In the background is Lori's father, Tim Zeisset. Also pictured, back to camera, Judy Ottensmeier.

## Trenton woman pens romantic novel *Seams* now available on Amazon

Lori Bell's self-published novel *Seams* isn't an autobiographical story, but there are parallels to be drawn between Bell's life and that of the book's protagonist, Kelsey Duncan.

Like the book's main character, Bell, who lives in Trenton with her husband Mike and their two children, says she has felt at times that her life was stitched too tight. Writing the book was an outlet for relieving that internal pressure.

"I'm a big reader myself," Bell says, "and I remember reading a quote

that went something like 'she could feel the seams of her life let out a bit' and I could really relate to that. Don't we all want to do that sometimes?"

Bell is a former newspaper reporter who took what she thought would be a temporary timeout from her career when she and her husband Mike had their first child, daughter Bailey. A son, Connor, followed, and when he was diagnosed with mild to moderate autism at the age of four, Lori's plans to return to the newspaper business were put on hold

indefinitely.

"I love being a stay-at-home mom," she said, "but I was also grateful to have the writing of this book as a creative outlet."

She wrote the novel in a near stream-of-consciousness over a period of two months, without an outline. "It was almost like an out-of-body experience," Lori says. "It just came out of me. The story just fell together."

She tried to write for four or five hours a day while her children were at

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school, but occasionally took to her computer in the evenings, when inspiration struck. "It was really important for me to get things down when an idea hit me," she said.

If the writing came relatively easy for her, the self-publishing process was a bit more cumbersome. The book was substantially finished in October of last year, but she only recently completed the publishing process.

Amazon has made publishing much more accessible to writers, Bell said, by offering a much less expensive option than traditional 'vanity' presses. "I basically did everything myself, from designing the cover to using their templates to lay out the chapters," she said. "It's all free unless you want their help in some of the design elements."

The novel is available as an ebook or in print, which are completed through an on-demand basis. "It's not terribly lucrative for the author," Bell said. "Amazon gets most of the price of the book. It would be great if it snowballed, but I didn't write it with the idea of making a lot of money. For me, it was more about finding an outlet for my creative side."

She has already written a sequel, and is in the process of self-publishing it as well. "I think the publishing process will go a lot smoother this time around, because I know what I'm doing a little better," said Bell. She expects the second book to be available by the end of the year.

"The response to it locally has been really great," she said. "I'm finding that people of all ages enjoy it, and I think that's because we can all relate to relieving the pressure in our lives a bit."

Seams is a romantic novel with adult content, so purchase is limited to those who are 18 and older.

Bell ordered 50 print copies of the book for a booksigning last Wednesday at the Trenton Library, part of the library's observation of National Library Month. She sold 35 the night of the signing, "and by the next day I had sold the rest of them," she said. She has also sold about 150 of the books through Amazon, either as ebooks or paper copies.

Bell worked as an intern at the Highland News-Leader while she was in college, and went on to work for six years as a reporter for the O'Fallon Progress. "I do miss it," she said of her newspaper career, "but I don't think writing this book would have been possible if not for the circumstances that put me in the position I'm in now."

Those who want to purchase the book in ebook format or hard copy can do so through Amazon by searching "Seams by Lori Bell."