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The Secret is out

By Liz McGathey, Staff writer
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For more than 25 years, Plano resident and former Plano Star Courier staff writer DeAnn Daley Holcomb has been a journalist sharing true life stories of the ups and downs of everyday people. For several years however, Holcomb has dreamed of telling a fictional tale in a novel.

Last month, her dream came true when her first book *Family Secrets* was released. In fact, Holcomb signed a deal to publish on her 25th wedding anniversary with husband Greg -- an appropriate start for a romance novel.

Family Secrets, published locally by The P3 Press, is set in a small Texas town, and chronicles the journey of three generations of women as they each explore their own hopes, fears and dreams.

"My friend Susie Samuels and I collaborated on the book. We kind of both came up with the plots and characters and we bounced ideas off one another. Then from there I did an outline of the chapters and I would write a chapter a week," Holcomb said. "We had a great time doing it."

The story follows Jennalee, Emma Cherie and Charlene, as they each work through their own life experiences. "For the young and beautiful Jennalee, it's coping with the shattering truth about her identity as she finds comfort in the arms of the strong, smart and handsome Lance Forrester. For the sweet and kind Emma Cherie, it's finding the courage to leave her abusive husband so that she may take a chance at finding happiness with her one true love. For the lovely and captivating Charlene, it's learning to relinquish control and let destiny take its course. At the heart of *Family Secrets* is the journey where shock and anger give way to humor and happiness, and the discovery of how a lifetime of experiences helps to reaffirm how important it is to live each day to the fullest."



DeAnn Daley Holcomb battled breast cancer during the three years she worked on her debut novel, Family Secrets. Submitted photo

"It's what we experience in all of our lives -- we all have our ups and downs; we all have our things that we want to conquer and goals that we want to reach. It's about life, losing love and finding love again, getting married, having kids -- just all the things that happen to everyone in life with twists and turns here and there," Holcomb said.

Holcomb said during the writing process, her laptop went everywhere with her. If she could squeeze in 30 minutes or three hours of writing, she would. Even at her son Spencer's sports events, Holcomb used downtime to write.

"It took over three years before it finally came out last month. A lot of that had to do with me being a first-time writer and it went through several edits," she said.

Less than a year after starting the book, Holcomb was diagnosed with breast cancer for the second time in her life -- but she wouldn't let that throw a hitch in the process.

"I never stopped writing and because of that, *Family Secrets* will always hold a very special place in my heart," she said. "The book is in honor of all of the strong women I have known throughout my life and all of the strong women I have written stories about and have read about."

Holcomb recently hosted a booth at the Peddler Show at Plano Centre. In her promotional flyers, she talks about having gone through treatment for breast cancer.

"It touched my heart and I was humbled when women would come back to my booth where I was selling and signing Family Secrets and wanted to talk about their experience with breast cancer," she said.

At the show, Holcomb met a woman whose daughter was going through breast cancer treatment. Holcomb was able to share her experience with the mother.

"It is amazing how many women either know someone who has gone through having breast cancer or it has touched their lives as they have personally been treated for breast cancer," she said.

Once Holcomb began treatment the writing slowed but never stopped.

"Even though I continued writing throughout, it did slow me down," she said. "I had to go through chemotherapy and the whole thing -- it's just a frightening experience to go through. I was just determined and I kept writing. I wasn't able to write as much as I did before because of being tired and all the things that you go through trying to get through that experience. I just told myself 'I am going to do this.'"

Now Holcomb is making the rounds with book signings and speaking at book club events. She will appear at Vintner's Cellar's Ladies Night Wine Tasting Event from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 15 and at Borders in Plano at 2 p.m. Nov. 15. Vintner's Cellar is located in Lakeside Market, 4025 Preston Rd. in Plano. Borders is at Park and Preston.

Holcomb has no plans to put away the pen yet. She is also hard at work on her second book, a mystery romance, Beyond the Shadows.

"I love to write; I'm still doing freelance writing too. "I just want to tell stories and I love to hear stories."

For information or to purchase Family Secrets, visit Holcomb's Web site at www.deanndaleyholcomb.com.