

Woman enjoys new fame as romance writer

By Shirlee Iden
staff writer

Ruth Langan doesn't do windows anymore.

Instead the Southfield wife and mother is busy opening windows on the world via her newfound success as a romance writer.

Six years ago, she decided to give herself an original birthday gift, one she had always wanted and one only she could give.

My gift to myself was to take an hour or two each day just for me to write," she says. "I actually did it for a couple of months before anyone caught on."

Eventually, her husband, Tom, who owns a bowling alley and pizza restaurant, and her children, Tommy, 22, Ciro, 21, Merry, 20, Patrick, 15, and Michael, 13, did catch on, understood and encouraged her.

Two years ago, Mrs. Langan sold her second romance, "Just Like Yesterday," to Silhouette Books, a subsidiary of the New York publishers, Simon and Schuster.

She's just signed a contract on her second sale.

Her first book was sold as a complete manuscript and was published last month.

Mrs. Langan enjoys recounting how she learned her book would be published.

"One day when I was feeling very grumpy and folding laundry, Tom called me and said 'You've got a call from New York' and I just said, Oh, sure. But it was them."

HANGING ON to the telephone in a state of semi-shock, she listened to talk of royalties and advertising hardly absorbing any of it.

Now, with all formalities taken care of, Mrs. Langan is enjoying some new

experiences such as interviews and television exposure.

"Channel 7 is doing a special report on romance authors later this month and they wanted a local person to focus on," she says. "So they called Houston where the romance writers organization is and they gave them my number."

Southfield's newest author has lived here most of her life. The Langans moved into their present home on Lois Lane more than 20 years ago after living in a Bell Road home where the expressway runs now.

"Tom and I both grew up here," she says. "We met in the first grade at St. Mike's. His mom says he came home from the first grade and said 'I met the girl I'm going to marry.'"

Her parents, Jack and Bea Ryan, (she still lives near St. Michael's), sent her to Ladywood High School because it was Catholic and there was a bus.

Tom's father, who died recently, was a justice of the peace and an early Southfield councilman.

"AND ME? I just always wanted to write but it's been a slowly evolving thing," she says.

After high school graduation, Mrs. Langan was offered a scholarship to Madonna College but passed it up to work as a secretary. At age 20, she and Tom Langan were married. "Everyone thought it would happen, but I wasn't so keen on marriage then," she recalls. "I wanted to travel."

The Langans have traveled widely in this country, Canada and Hawaii, often with their children. But they are home and church people too. Mrs. Langan is president of the Woman's Club at St. Michael's with a membership of 850.

In their yard, she'll tell you, squirrels and pheasants frisk about.

"And every night a possum comes up for his snack. We have two dogs and two cats, but they only chase the squirrels."

Part of that scene is visible to Ruth Langan when she sits before her typewriter in her bedroom each day. But it wasn't always like that.

"In my generation, you just put everything on the back burner and raised your kids," she says.

But then came that special birthday gift she gave herself, one that will never wear out and that she's never regretted.

Now the hour or two stretch to about four hours each day at the typewriter, hours spent working through frequent interruptions such as chauffeuring the kids, woman's club business, caring for animals and running her regular four miles each day.

"I HAVE an open door policy when I work. The kids can always come in and they know that. I never close the door because they still want me to be here."

Mrs. Langan's never had trouble with writer's block or ideas either. Her problem at first was getting to the typewriter.

"I have this idea file," she says. "If I get an idea, I toss it in special file — but I've never looked at it yet."

Her first romance took her a year to

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—Ruth Langan
romance writer

write, but now she can do one in three or four months. "Just Like Yesterday" was set in Michigan while some of the other stories are located in spots visited on family travels.

"Books set in other towns take a lot of research, but the people at the Southfield Library have been wonderful," she says.

No stranger to libraries, she has devoured books since she learned to read. "I grew up reading," she says. "I could never get enough."

"I always read seeing how they constructed the novel. I thought everyone did that."

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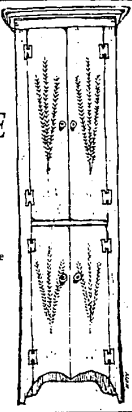
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