

## This Week Savage Newspaper

### Local author hits publishing paydirt

Mystery-suspense writer has five books accepted for publication

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by **Andrew Miller**

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J.L. “Jean” Wilson was tired of reading mystery novels in which the heroines are trim young sex-kittens trained in karate.

So when the 55-year-old Savage resident sat down to write a mystery novel of her own, she decided to create lead characters that baby boomers could connect with.

“My heroines — these are not slim babes, these are people (you’d see) walking down the street,” she said. And all the characters tend to be in their 40s or 50s.

Wilson’s strategy seemed to strike a nerve with publishers, and she has five novels slated for publication later this year.

Two novels will be released in June as digital downloads, with print versions available in the months following.

“Brownies, Bodies and Breaking the Code,” a mystery set in Minnesota, follows Jessie Patrokus as she uncovers a potential terrorist plot after a co-worker dies from eating brownies she brought to the company’s Christmas potluck.

“Your Saving Grace,” a suspense novel, unfolds around heroine Hannah Paxton as she attempts to evade two stalkers.

Typically, Wilson cranks out a first draft of a novel in six weeks. A technical writer for an Eden Prairie company, she jots down ideas during the work day on a handheld computer, and then logs a few hours punching out prose on her home computer in the evening.

And while she likes to mentally chart out a story arc before she starts a novel, she says it’s not totally unfair to describe her as a “pants-er” — an author who writes by the seat of her pants.

“I just sit down and start writing and see where the characters take me,” she said.

As for one of the novels being published later this year, “I had no idea who the murderer was until Chapter 14,” she said.

A native of Vinton, Iowa, Wilson often relies on small towns as setting for her books, but occasionally draws from life in the suburbs.

Readers in the south metro will recognize some local venues popping up from time to time in Wilson’s literary oeuvre — Apple Valley and Eagan are both featured in upcoming novels. And a book she plans on publishing next year is set at the Kwik Trip gas station on County Road 42 in Savage.

When it comes time to sketch characters, Wilson often looks close to home. In the novel “If Not For You,” the protagonist is an ex-hippie war protester — a description that fits Wilson to a T.

“My husband (James Boles) laughed and said, ‘I think I know who you patterned that on,’ ” she said.

J.L. “Jean” Wilson’s novels will be available through her Web site, [www.jayellwilson.com](http://www.jayellwilson.com). The Web site also provides synopses of the novels and a monthly news bulletin.

**Andrew Miller** is at [savage.thisweek@ecm-inc.com](mailto:savage.thisweek@ecm-inc.com).