

Local Novelist Finds Success in Her Seventies

Laid off when the dot com bubble burst, Joann Smith Ainsworth became a romance novelist

By Amy Sylvestri
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When Joann Smith Ainsworth found herself laid off from her job at the age of 64, she turned to romance novels. But Ainsworth didn't just sit on her couch and read books with Fabio on the cover, she became an author herself.

After working for 40 years in the business sector, Ainsworth decided to go back to her roots (she has a master's degree in English in addition to her MBA) and began to seriously devote herself to writing.

"I was planning to work until I was 70, but then the dot com bust happened," said Ainsworth.

She worked as a database administrator and prided herself on keeping up with technology, but when she reentered the job market, she couldn't compete with younger candidates.

Ainsworth had always dabbled in writing in her spare time, so she used her unemployment as an opportunity to finally be able to write full time.

Today, in her mid-seventies, Ainsworth has two historical romances in print, and has just begun a paranormal suspense trilogy.

Ainsworth said that, despite her career change, her daily routine isn't that different from her time in the office.

"I need structure, so every morning, I wake up and do my exercises. Some of the exercises I do are from the 1960s. I got them

out of a fitness brochure put out by the Kennedy administration," said Ainsworth with a laugh.

"Then I get on my laptop and write for two to four hours. In the afternoons, I do marketing and business things for the books," she said.

But Ainsworth's transition into becoming an author wasn't seamless. She received rejection notices for two years before finally landing an agent.

Unfortunately, that agent died in the midst of shopping her first novel around to New York publishing houses and she was left high and dry.

"Without an agent, you don't even hear back from the publishers for 18 months with a rejection. You are just sitting in a pile on someone's desk," said Ainsworth.

"So I started to look at independent publishers."

Ainsworth became a member of the Romance Writers of America and got her first novel, *Out of the Dark*, published in March.

A second, *Matilda's Song*, is due in stores this fall.

Both *Matilda's Song* and *Out of the Dark* are set in medieval England, and feature kings, queens, lusty maidens, sword fights, adultery and everything else one might expect from a historical romance.

Currently, Ainsworth is working on a paranormal trilogy set during World War II, and featuring a group of American

psychics recruited by the government to outwit Hitler's own team of occultists.

She said that she hopes her late-in-life success will inspire others to not give up on their passions in life.

"Basically, what I hope people realize is that, yes, life changes, but sometimes you'll find opportunities coming from what seems to be disaster," said Ainsworth. "Life is a series of self-fulfilling events. It is important to stay focused and not allow yourself to slip into a rut. You'll find your belief in yourself has a lot to do with how life develops."

Ainsworth's novels are available at Amazon.com and the San Leandro Library.

Ainsworth updates her website (www.joannsmithainsworth.com), Twitter, and Facebook regularly.



PHOTO BY AMY SYLVESTRI

Joann Smith Ainsworth began a career in writing historical romances when she lost her job with a tech company. She is currently at work on a paranormal suspense trilogy set during World War II.