



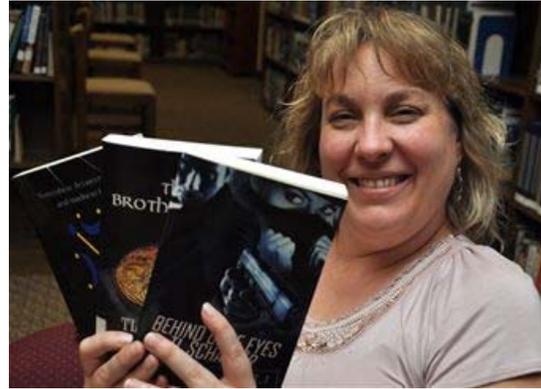
AFSO21 manager pens novels in her spare time

by Airman 1st Class Frank John Casciotta
71st Flying Training Wing Public Affairs

9/21/2011 - **VANCE AIR FORCE BASE, Okla.** -- It was 1999. Terri Schaefer, then a secretary with the 71st Medical Operations Squadron here, was perusing her emails when a subject line caught her attention. It was confirmation that the book she submitted was going to be e-published.

It was tangible proof she actually had what it takes to be a real author.

"I remember what she said when she found out," said Yvonne Lewis-Odom, the demand reduction program manager with the 71st Medical Operations Squadron and long-time friend of Terri. "They are going to do my book, they are actually going to do my book."



Terri Schaefer with three of the 10 books she has written and published since 1999. When not writing, she serves as the strategy program manager in the 71st Flying Training Wing Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century office at Vance Air Force Base, Okla. (U.S. Air Force photo/ Airman 1st Class Frank John Casciotta)

"She had this look on her face of amazement, accomplishment, satisfaction and confirmation all rolled into one in a very subdued and controlled way," said Lewis-Odom. "Her eyes said what she was feeling, not her mouth."

"I toyed with it when I was a kid, from writing short stories to letters-to-the-editor, and enjoyed the heck out of English class in high school and college," said Schaefer, now the strategy program manager of the 71st Flying Training Wing Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century office.

"When I first started writing seriously and submitting to publishers, it was almost like an exercise to determine if I was good enough or not," said Schaefer.

"When you talk with Terri you would never think she could come up with the material she writes about. She's really good," said Lewis-Odom.

"Writing is an art form. Like any other artist, it's how I choose to express myself," said Schaefer. Sometimes she gets her story ideas from news events. Other times she will see a mannerism she likes in someone and just watches where it goes.

Schaefer's writing career was born of boredom. Then she started taking it seriously by exploring ways to get published, seeking out target audiences and asking for honest opinions about her work.

"I do most of my writing during football season," said Schaefer. "I started writing seriously when we returned from an assignment to the Azores." She is married to August Schaefer, a retired Air Force technical sergeant currently a government civilian with the 8th Flying Training Squadron here.

"Suddenly we had a gazillion cable channels and three years of sports deprivation under our belts," Schaefer said. "Football isn't really my gig, but I've overheard enough to understand the basics and annoy my husband from time to time -- while I'm writing, of course."

These days it is easier to get published than it once was. An up and coming writer does not need to have an agent and a publisher backing them. There are several self-publishing websites available that help an author design their own books and put them up for sale.

Schaefer warns that authors just starting out sometimes expect their first book to be a success. When it isn't, they become discouraged. Going in with the intention to make a million dollars isn't really the best type of

motivation because it takes away from the drive to be creative.

"Don't expect your first book to be a masterpiece. It is very, very rare for something like that to happen," said Schaefer.

Some people who are inspired to write a book just need to get what's in their head out on paper. But that doesn't necessarily mean what they write will appeal to readers, Schaefer said.

"It's great to start out writing what you want to write about. But when you become more concerned with making money, check out what's selling," said Schaefer. "I'm not saying that you should copy someone else's book, but get a feel for what readers are interested in."

Her job with AFSO21 keeps her busy during the day working to improve workplace efficiency for Team Vance. But she makes sure to practice her writing every day. Like any other skill worth pursuing, writing requires discipline, diligence and dedication.

"You have to do it every day. It's like working out. When I haven't been writing regularly I feel drained afterwards. But once I get back into the rhythm it gets easier," said Schaefer. "Set small, short-term goals for yourself at first, maybe a page or two."

Before publishing her early works, Schaefer liked to use critique partners for input and advice. They provided extra eyes and minds to potentially improve the work.

"I used critique partners because I want to know if my book sucked or not," she said shrugging nonchalantly. "Of course now I look back and see a million things I would have changed, but that's because I've matured as a writer. It's like selecting clothing. I wouldn't wear today what I wore ten years ago."

So far, Schaefer has had four books published on paper and six through e-publishing. Currently, she is working on about 30 books, soon to be 28 as she plans to finish two of them in the near future.

To find out more about Schaefer's books, visit the Base Library. When she has a new book published, a copy always goes on the shelf there.