

Our Authors: Author attempts to 'write what you know' in new fiction book

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Name: Margo Wilson

Age: 63

Current town/city of residence: Monessen, Pa.

Connection to Racine County: I was a reporter and copy editor at The Journal Times from 1977-1983. I covered county government and higher education and edited the food and consumer pages, among other duties. My husband, the late Michael Kraft, and I owned the Sanctuary Restaurant in the building that is now Ivanhoe Pub & Eatery.

Occupation: I was a newspaper reporter and editor for 20 years, winding up at the Los Angeles Times. These days, I teach journalism and English at California University of Pennsylvania and chair the English Department.

Title of book and publisher: "The Main Ingredient," published by Ramsfield Press.

Synopsis of book (plot): West Coast food editor Wendy Whitby returns to her Wisconsin hometown because her mother is dying. But her feisty mom, Seal, refuses to expire. While Wendy waits for Seal to recover, she helps out two buddies who have opened a restaurant in the rundown downtown. When the eatery mysteriously goes up in flames, the three women are forced to track down the arsonist to avoid prison. Their investigation scratches open old wounds, carves some new ones and forces the women to consider how much one should do for friends, for family and for a piece of fried lake perch.

Is this your first book? It is my first published book. I have written an unpublished novel about a native American in search of his identity, as well as 10 screenplays and a number of short stories. I'm working on a memoir about travel/taking a journey, as well as about a dog and cat who, well, let's leave it at that.

Why did you write the book? I've always been interested in both journalistic and "creative writing," although I believe journalism can be a creative endeavor. I wanted to pay tribute to women's friendships and to the difficulties and the power of mother/daughter love. I also wanted to tackle some issues that are important to me, such as taking pride in one's community and trying to make it a better place.

As a journalist, I always wrote about other people. Writing in first person is not something that comes naturally for me and I wanted to attempt the challenge. As a journalist, I also wrote a lot about what other people know. I thought I'd try out the adage of "write what you know" by making one of the characters a newspaper food editor and the milieu in which the story takes place a restaurant. I am familiar with these worlds.

But the work is fiction, not about me. So I guess once a journalist, always a journalist, because I'm still writing about others.

How long did it take you to write the book? I wrote the bulk of the book over a two-year period but have been tuning it up for nearly a decade.

How did you get interested in writing? I was an only child until my brother came along when I was 4. Until then, I was pretty much on my own. It was kind of lonely, so I invented some imaginary friends. It was fun to create my own reality and I've never wanted to give that up. My mother also taught me to read at an early age. I discovered the power of the written word and how it can take you places you'd never get to any other way. I was hooked on reading and writing before first grade.

Where is the book available for purchase? It is available from ramsfieldpress.com.

Is the book available at the library? The Racine Public Library will have a copy.

Website or Facebook page readers can visit for more information: My publisher's website is www.ramsfieldpress.com; my Website is www.margowilson.com.