

Home is where the heart is for columnist, author Jameson

By **ARLENE MANNLEIN - H&R Staff Writer** | Posted: Sunday, February 14, 2010 7:00 pm

DECATUR - What did you think? Did you read the book? If not, would you like a copy of my book to read?

Many times over the last five years, I've been asked those questions and others, all implying that this column is an opportunity for authors to have their work reviewed.

That, however, has never been the case, nor was it the intention of the column when it started. I often joke with authors that, so far, my editors have not agreed to pay me for time reading.

That being said, sometimes when a book is in hand, I do take the opportunity to skim pages, usually finding something that catches my interest and makes me stop to read, at least a passage.

All of this leads into the discussion with today's author, Marni Jameson, who has a column that runs in the Sunday Decatur Herald & Review Home section. A copy of "House of Havoc" sits now by my computer keyboard and, yes, this time I admit it: I did skim some pages.

Q: Noting what I consider humor, have people told you remind them of any other author?

When Jameson was a young girl, she said her mother would read her excerpts of the late Irma Bombeck's writings.

"I loved it," she remembered.

"When people say that, I just blossom," said Jameson, if there is any reference noting similarities between the two women's writings.

She, however, doesn't see herself as particularly amusing, more warm and light-hearted.

"People who know me wouldn't think that would be a stand-out quality," she said. "I like to take that obscure angle and see how it works."

And she said, there's no problem making fun of herself.

Q: Are your columns and your books the same voice?

"Very much the same voice," she said. "The columns do fold into the book."

Her weekly column is usually devoted to what is "going sideways at my house," she said.

Her column runs in 30 newspapers and she can claim credit to about 7 million readers. That doesn't hurt when it comes to contacting sources.

"I do get access to really great people," she said. "I do get my phone calls returned."

"Had I not had a column and editors, I probably wouldn't have gotten the book deal. So that helped. One helps the other. It's really fun to have the books."

Jameson did add, however, that as a journalist (and graduate of the University of Kansas), writing 75,000 words was on the intimidating side.

"Oh, my, gosh!" she said. "It's like swimming across the English Channel underwater with an octopus!"

Q: Are your columns/books personal?

"I like my story to come from some personal experience I'm having, some personal problem, something I'm trying to do in my own house."

She's not going to write about replacing windows, for example, if windows in their home aren't being replaced.

"If I do have a following, it's because home life and home design are a blur. If there is a line between them, there is a murky one.

"The laundry, the mail, the newspapers, they are very inspirational."

Even dog nose prints on the windows.

Q: And some hints about "House of Havoc?"

"You may be able to achieve it, perfection, for a moment," she said.

But there's something called family, pets, guests. "What are you going to do? Get rid of them so you can have a beautiful house?"

Jameson, who lives near Denver, said she tries to develop systems to deal with "things" in a home.

"It's not the things that are out of place. It's that things don't have a place to begin with. If you have a system for these, you are going to be way ahead of it."

Books and other products received by the Decatur Herald & Review are placed in an in-house silent auction. The money is then passed along to a local charity. Our last auction honored our colleague, the late Ron Ingram, by sending the donation to the Boy Scouts of America Lincoln Trails Council.

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