

Author DeAnn Daley Holcomb follows her dreams and publishes her first novel, *Family Secrets*

IT'S NO SECRET that Charlene Christabelle Maurice is Dallas' own Truvy Jones, blond, beautiful, and voluptuous, and like Dolly Parton's character in *Steel Magnolias*, she's a beauty shop owner who dishes out advice on life, love and sex to all her clients at Charlene's House of Style. Charlene feels it's her duty to save the world with every clip of her scissors and click of her heels, but behind all of the lipstick-laden advice are secrets as deadly as the staunch smell of a perm.

When Charlene discovers that her niece Emma Cherie Secrest can't conceive a baby, she devises a plan to bring her a daughter named Jennalee. The plot thickens when Jennalee discovers the truth about



Author **DeAnn Daley Holcomb**. Profile photo

her identity and that her great-aunt Charlene has kept it a secret for 20 years.

Three generations of women, 33 chapters, and one heart-wrenching story, **DeAnn Daley Holcomb's *Family Secrets*** is about self-discovery and finding love and losing love. It reads much like a soap opera (drama, romance, flashback, cliffhanger, more drama); it even takes place in a suburb called Pleasant Valley; yet, the book depicts very real emotions, along

with actual street names like Lake June Road, and historical events like the Kennedy assassination.

"*Family Secrets* is about family and friendship," said the author. "Everyone has their dreams they want to conquer. This book is about the ups and downs that we all experience through our journey in life and how you never give up on your dreams."

Before realizing her dream, DeAnn graduated from Texas Tech and entered a career in television news at KMID-TV in Midland as a reporter, anchor, and later news director. "After my son Spencer was born, I decided the 10 o'clock newscast was not going to work for my family, so I went to work for State Sen. Teel Bivins. During the job interview he said, 'You have a degree in journalism, you've done television news, now what do you want to do?' and I said, 'I want to write a book.'"

Her plan would be put on hold though as DeAnn's husband, Greg, was transferred to Dallas for his job. The Holcombs chose to live in Plano for its family-oriented atmosphere and strong school system. "We felt like Plano was a perfect fit for our family," DeAnn said.

DeAnn landed a job at the *Plano Star-Courier*, and later became the associate editor for *Health and Fitness Sports* magazine in Dallas. "Finally, I decided it was time to do what I said I would do, so I took a novel writing class at Collin County Community College."

She committed to writing a chapter a week, and sometimes that meant writing in the car or in the stands just before her son Spencer, who attends Plano Senior High School, had a football or baseball game. "I took my laptop everywhere. If he had to be at a game early, I was writing. Thirty minutes or 10 minutes, I was always writing."

In October 2005, DeAnn received the shocking news that she had breast cancer. She turned to her family, friends, and to God. "I prayed and then I focused and worked on the book; I prayed and then I focused," she repeated and said, "Going through that experience made me more determined to finish *Family Secrets*."

DeAnn added, "Never give up in life, in your spirit and your quest to follow your dreams, no matter what might stand in your way."

A running theme in the book is that in every situation, there is a life lesson. "There are good things and bad things that happen in all of our lives, and you have to take each experience and make it positive," said the author. "Make sure it makes you a better person."

Family Secrets has proven to be a positive experience for DeAnn. She signed a contract with P3Press (Brown Books Publishing) on her and Greg's 25th anniversary. "He looked at me with a huge smile on his face and said, 'Happy Anniversary!'"

Greg can be credited for the book cover; he took the photo at Bob Woodruff Park in Plano. The man in the picture is a family friend, Drew Landers. His younger brother, Reid, is friends with DeAnn's son, Spencer, and when DeAnn and Reid's mom, Tammy, drove to Waco to pick the boys up from a Baylor University baseball camp, DeAnn met Drew's girlfriend, Molli.

"When I saw Molli, I nearly fainted. You would have thought I had seen her and then wrote Jennalee's character," said DeAnn. "I told Drew, 'Molli has to pose for my book cover because she is Jennalee.' Drew called her on his cell phone and she agreed. So it was all kind of a family affair!"

"Writing this book has been a wonderful experience," said the author. "The editing process was grueling, but I'm having a great time going to book signings and talking to book clubs. It's exciting to meet so many people."

DeAnn will be attending a book signing and brunch on Saturday, December 6 at Mosaic Dallas of Hamilton Properties in downtown Dallas. And in January, she will be speaking to the Writers' Guild of Texas.

The author continues working as a writer for local and national magazines, and she also works as a PISD substitute teacher. In addition, DeAnn has begun a second novel, a murder mystery called *Beyond the Shadows*. She said, "I have six chapters written and I'm planning to get back to it in January, but I'm having too much fun with this!"

Purchase *Family Secrets* at deanndaleyholcomb.com or at one of the author's local book signings.

— BRITNEY PORTER

excerpt

From *Family Secrets*

How was I going to control my emotions after what my father told me?

It shattered who I am. I was on my way to confront them. After all these years, I discovered everyone had lied to me. My mother, my favorite great aunt—so many in my family must have known. Does Lucas know?

The secret was out. There would be no turning back.



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