

# Local author writes more than mystery

By JEFF HUDSON  
CORRESPONDENT

**L**AURIE R. KING'S newly published novel — "A Grave Talent" — is her first book to see print, but it won't be the last.

King, a resident of the Watsonville area for the past decade, has completed three more novels, part of a series to be published by St. Martin's, which also published her current title.

Her emergence as a writer has occurred gradually over the past eight years.

"I have been writing fiction in one form or another since 1984, sporadically," she said, "In about 1986, I actually sat down and wrote the first one from beginning to end."

Her current title revolves around two investigators from the homicide division of the San Francisco police, who are looking into the murders of three little girls. Their search takes them to the hills south of San Francisco, and involves a brilliant woman painter with a troubled past.

It's a story that some will categorize as a mystery, though King says she isn't quite sure that the term is fully applicable.

"I have trouble with the idea of genre fiction," she said. "... My stuff is not really a mystery in that sense, it's not a 'whodunit.' One kind of book is a sort of puzzle, one is about characters. Ideally a good mystery should be both. I lean towards characters."

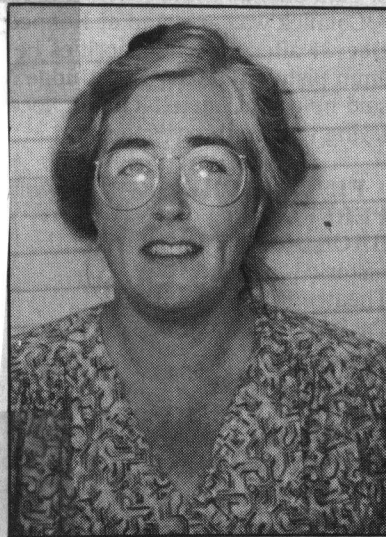
But there are still plenty of elements mystery readers will recognize.

"I had been playing with this idea of Sherlock Holmes and a female sidekick in the 1920s, and originally I was going to set it in that period," King said. "But it seemed I could fit it just as easily in the late 20th century, in San Francisco and Santa Cruz. What I was trying to do with this was make a central character who did not take part in the action ... exploring the possibility of making a novel

where the central character was more a force of nature than anything.

"All of my books tend to be about women, how women work, how women think and relate to each other. I can't imagine a man as a main character in a novel. It's true with most authors, I think — most books by men about women strike me as very artificial, and vice versa."

King has long been active in La Leche League, and enjoys traveling (England, Australia, New Zealand, South America)



**Author Laurie King**

as well as study. She wrote her master's thesis in theology, through the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley while nursing a young child.

King does her writing when she can, saying "it's very difficult to follow a set pattern. If I've got something really going, ideally I'd write 14 hours a day. But life doesn't always give you 14 hours a day to write in."

Life, in King's case, includes

daughter, Zoe, a seventh-grader at Rolling Hills Middle School and son, Nathan, a student at Salsipuedes Elementary. Her husband, Noel, retired from the UC Santa Cruz faculty a few years back.

"We have a three-generation family, which helps with babysitting," King said.

"My daughter's teacher invited me to come and talk about the writing process. The kids were really excited to see the novel progress from written page" — King does her first drafts with a fountain pen — "through a finished manuscript, to a letter of acceptance from the publisher, then the manuscript with editorial comments in different colored pencils, to the bound galleys, and now the finished (printed) book. They're my fan club. That kind of public speaking I don't mind."

King will, however, be making at least one appearance open to the public at large — a book signing tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. at the Capitola Book Cafe in the Kings Plaza Shopping Center, Capitola Road at 41st Avenue, Capitola.

## Writer offers a peek into the grave

**L**AURIE KING has offered a glimpse into her new book, "A Grave Talent":

The brain of the woman who had been Vaun Adams was not damaged, not badly at any rate. Her mind, however, her spirit — those had been severely wounded.

The spark of being that was Vaun Adams, the spark that had flamed into being as Eva Vaughn, lay smothered beneath a burden that had finally proven intolerable. Vaun was covered by a blanket of despair, a thick, gray blanket that was crushing her, stifling her will to move and create and live, a thick gray blanket that said "Enough."

Enough.

Enough was the ruling principle that governed what was left of this life. Enough. I can no more. Since I was 2 years old I have fought for the right to be what I am, and I can fight no longer. I yield. I give up. I can no more. Enough.

I choose to die.

The blue eyes were still open when a nurse came in 10 minutes later to check the drip. Vaun's ears registered sound waves, and some dim hidden part of her automatically deciphered them as words, but they did not connect, did not penetrate the thick gray blanket.

The nurse leaned over her eyes, and behind the white

shoulder appeared the face of a man above a dark uniform. More sounds came, a few squawks and a rumble, and the male face withdrew.

The nurse addressed Vaun with professional cheeriness, though even the guard could hear the uneasiness in her voice. Vaun was a problem, a VIP who was in an unclear state of either arrest or protection, or both. She was also, to all appearances, a vegetable.

This mysterious black-haired woman with the unseeing, crystalline eyes gave a number of people the creeps, and the night nurse was one of them. She left after servicing the body in the bed, and eventually the eyes drifted shut again.