

It's no mystery, Watsonville author among the best

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LAURIE KING, one of Watsonville's literary lights, earned a place in history when her mystery novel, "Grave Talent," was awarded the Edgar Award for Best First Novel by an American Author by the Mystery Writers of America.

The award was presented April 27 during the MWA's annual meeting in New York. Sue Grafton, MWA president, made the presentation along with mystery writer Joe Gores.

King beat out four other nominees for the award. Also nominated were "The List of Seven" by Mark Frost, "Criminal Seduction" by Darian North, "Zaddik" by David Rosenbaum and "The Ballad of Rocky Ruiz" by Manuel Ramos.

"I had no inkling I would win. It was



Mystery writer Laurie King was honored with an Edgar Award for First Best Novel.

totally unexpected," King said Tuesday. "It was a strong bunch and I really thought Ramos would take it."

King's acceptance speech mirrored her shock.

"It will perhaps indicate what I thought of my competition when I tell you that I did not prepare an accep-

tance speech," she said to the crowd of 1,200 writers and publishers who attended the event.

King plans to put the award, which is made of porcelain, somewhere where the cat can't hit it.

"It really is the ugliest statue. Maybe I'll hang it from the ceiling by a noose. That would be appropriate," she joked.

King is writing a sequel called "To Play the Fool," which will again feature Kate Martinelli, the San Francisco lesbian private investigator.

She also published this year "A Beekeeper's Apprentice," which featured an aged Sherlock Holmes and young female sleuth. The book was well-received by critics and readers.

King came to Santa Cruz in 1973 as a student at UC Santa Cruz. Under the tutelage of professor Noel King, her future husband, she blossomed as an academic in theology, eventually earning a

master's degree at Berkeley. During this time she also had two children, to which she still devotes much of her time.

Although she often writes 14 hours a day and the recent flurry of positive press delights her greatly, she admitted in a recent Sentinel interview that she could not have written these books if she had not had the economic support of her spouse.

But, award in hand, even that has changed.

"It looks like I can make a living at it now."

King will be at Crossroads Books, in the Crossroads Shopping Center, Main Street, Watsonville, at 7:30 p.m. Friday to help celebrate the bookstore's grand opening. She will answer questions, sign books and, with other authors, discuss the craft and technique of mystery writing.