

# WORKING WONDERS WITH WORDS

Appleton resident Lauer finds  
niche as novelist

BY TIM FROBERG

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Skilled novelists like Amanda Lauer are imaginative individuals who can transport people to different time periods, far-away places and strange new worlds.

Lauer never left Appleton and doesn't own a time machine, but has taken readers on repeated travels to the Civil War era.

The 1980 Appleton West graduate has accomplished that through her amazing ability to weave words onto a once-blank computer template and create compelling stories.

Lauer — a long-time Appleton resident — is an accomplished Christian author who has written multiple novels. Her best-known work has been creating the critically acclaimed "Heaven Intended" series: a four-book collection and love story that follows fictional characters through the tragic days of the Civil War.

While she's taken readers on intriguing trips through time, Lauer's personal journey as an author-novelist has been unique and a bit unexpected. Many authors claim that the trickiest part to writing a book is getting started....and it took time for Lauer to launch her literary career.

Lauer always had a strong interest in writing and history, but didn't set out to write books for a living following high school. She initially majored in chemical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, took a job in the insurance industry for what is now Secura Insurance and worked for several years in the Fox Cities as a proofreader, copy editor and journalist for different publications.

Lauer took time off to raise a family (she and her husband, John, have been married for 41 years and have four adult children) and didn't seriously consider writing books until a friend, Melissa Westemeier of Freedom, who is also a writer, challenged her to make an attempt at it. Lauer was 52 when her first book, "A World Such as Heaven Intended," was published.

"Melissa and I had initially agreed to both write a chapter of a book and we'd swap and proofread for each other," Lauer said. "I didn't know how to write a book. I literally grabbed a book off my shelf and said, 'How do they do this?' I was a nervous wreck and couldn't even enjoy the holidays that year because I had to get a chapter done.

"We got together once a month for two years. After two years, we both had books. She got her book published and has written several more. I wrote one and thought, 'That's it. My life is complete. I'm going back to my journalism career.'"

But she didn't — at least not permanently. Lauer's initial book was published in October of 2014 and was a hit, launching her career as a novelist. Three successful Heaven Intended paperback sequels followed — all stemming from an intriguing interview Lauer once did when she was working as a journalist for the Fox Cities Newspapers.

"I interviewed a gentleman who had a ton of Civil War paraphernalia in his house," Lauer said. "He told me a story about his great-great-great uncle's experiences in the Civil War. It was the most interesting story and I thought, 'Someone should write a story about that, or make a movie.' I had never heard a story quite like that."

"I had always loved historic fiction, but wanted to read clean historic fiction and couldn't find it. So I thought, 'I'm going to write a book myself.' I gave my friend's great-great-great uncle a better ending to his life than what he actually had at the end of the Civil War." Once she had a publisher — Full Quiver Publishing — Lauer began learning the nuts and bolts of how to write a novel.

"It was hard," Lauer said. "It was tough finding a publisher and 'Oh, the rewriting.' The publisher that I finally went with had me change the story from third person to first-person-limited perspective. I didn't even know what that was. I had Google it to figure out what the heck they wanted.

"My stories are told where every other chapter is in the male protagonist's head and the female protagonist's head. At the time, I didn't even know what the word 'protagonist' meant. I had a lot to learn."

"But it all goes back to my friend (Westemeier) holding me accountable and saying, 'Just write one chapter.' Without an accountability partner like that, I would have never gotten this off the ground."

Building on her original book and delivering the Heaven Intended series was the result of interest shown by readers.

"After the first one, one of my friends told me, 'My 93-year-old grandmother wants to know what happened to Dominic,'" Lauer said. "When is the sequel coming out?" I said, 'I don't know what happens to Dominic. It took me six years to get this one out. How am I going to do another one?'"

But Lauer delivered three more Heaven Intended paperbacks along with a fifth novel, "Anything but Groovy." The latter is loosely based on Lauer's experiences as a seventh-grade student at St. John Catholic School in Antigo. Her next book is titled "Royal and Ancient" and involves time travel and one of Lauer's favorite sports: golf.

"It's about a girl who works at a golf course, gets struck by lightning and wakes up and thinks it's the same golf course, St. Andrews, but it's the Royal St. Andrews in Scotland in the year 1691," Lauer said.

In addition to her novels, Lauer has also contributed to the books, "Treasures: Visible and Invisible:" a collection of short stories by eight Catholic authors; "Dubbie: The Double-Headed Eagle," "The Best is Yet to Come," "The Catholic Grandparents Handbook" and "Living Virtuously."

She is also the co-author of "Celebrate Appleton, a 150th Birthday Photo Album."

Lauer's work isn't confined to books. She was part of a writing team that created a screenplay for the Christian movie, "The Islands" which won the 2020 Red Letter Award Best Writer or Screenplay.

"Everything I've done has been through on-the-job experiences and learning from other people," she said. "I remember the first time I did an interview for Fox Cities Newspapers. I volunteered to cover Xavier football and was scared to death. I was shaking so hard I don't even think you could hear the recording on my tape player. But that's where I learned to write."

Lauer continues to write freelance articles for The Business News and The Compass — the official newspaper of the Green Bay Diocese — and works occasionally as a model and actress. Her writing generally reflects her Catholic faith, but in a tone that isn't pushy or overzealous.

"People of all faiths read my books and people of no faith read them, because they're not preachy," she said. "The reason people are Catholic in my books is because I have to write from what I know. It's all about how these people are just trying to become better versions of themselves every day."

"My purpose is to write wholesome unforgettable stories that align with my faith and values to touch the hearts of countless people world-wide."