# Annie Seaton author talk

Recorded February 3, 2022

**00:00:04 Kirsty**

Good evening and welcome. My name is Kirsty and I am one of the librarians at Wyndham City Libraries.

**00:00:13 Kirsty**

I'd like to start tonight with an acknowledgement of country. So, I wish to acknowledge the Wadawurrung and Boonwurrung peoples of the Kulin nation; the traditional custodians of the land on which Wyndham is being built.

On behalf of our guests, I'd also like to acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr people as the traditional custodians of the lands they're joining us from.

We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

**00:00:45 Kirsty**

Tonight we are joined by Annie Seaton, the award-winning author of *Whitsunday Dawn* and over 50 other popular books including the Porter Sisters series and Pentecost Island series. Her latest release is *Osprey Reef* - a story of love, greed and revenge set against the stunning backdrop of the Great Barrier Reef.

Thank you for joining us Annie and I'll leave you to it.

**00:01:19 Annie Seaton**

Thank you Kirsty.

Are you right for me to start now?

I have a screen of all different initials, so I'm assuming it's right to go.

**00:01:28 Kirsty**

Yes, right. Fire at will.

**00:01:31 Annie Seaton**

OK, welcome everybody.

It's wonderful to see you here tonight and thank you very much to Wyndham Libraries for having me and Kirsty and I had a little practice go last week and everything was right, but I've since had a change of plans and set up in a different room in my study with my books behind me, so I'm hoping you can see everything and it's light enough.

With COVID the author library tours have been very different over the last two years and instead of packing up my books and my good clothes and my makeup and having the manicure and the hair all sorted and heading off to various locations, I now sit in my study and the lipstick goes on and the good top half goes on.

I won't show you the shorts and bare feet I have on the bottom half.

**00:02:26 Annie Seaton**

So COVID has made a difference to our library visits, but it's really encouraging to see that you know we're getting between 20 and 30 people come to these online presentations, which is often more than you get at some of the face-to-face ones, so again a thank you to Wyndham Libraries. So, Kirsty one thing to remind me at the end after we have our chat session tonight for one of the commentators and one of our guests, I'm giving away a full set of the Porter Sisters series — which book 5 is coming out in March, so I'm looking forward to having a winner of that tonight, so.

**00:03:10 Annie Seaton**

Tanya has just put our first question up, which leads me in nicely to what I was going to talk about tonight anyway.

So Tanya says ‘what has prompted me or what prompted me or inspired me to start writing?’ So there's two sections or two answers to that question.

**00:03:31 Annie Seaton**

The first one was when I was four years old.

My mother took me to a library in Brisbane. Annerley Library and we used to go there every Thursday and I could still remember the curved ramp that went up from, I think it was Annerley Rd into the library and every Thursday I got to go there and I'd be taken to this wonderful shelf where there was these magic things called books and I was allowed to take them home and read them, and I think that was the actual moment that my love of reading my love of stories and my desire to tell stories began.

So fast-forward from that year when I was four years of age to when I was 12 and I actually wrote my first little book in lead pencil in an exercise book. We then moved from Brisbane down to Newcastle and unfortunately that story got lost somewhere in the move.

My next writing happened when I was 33 years old and we moved to the mid North Coast of New South Wales where we live now.

So we've lived here for quite a long time.

Our children grew up here and they've gone away and been to university and they've come back home and we've now got grandchildren. Luckily very blessed to have our children and grandchildren all in the same town that we live in.

A little town just South of Coffs Harbour.

So I joined the writer’s group at Nambucca in the late 80s and my first short story was published in their first publication called The Estuary. At one of my previous library talk a few weeks ago someone had actually read a blog that I'd written about that short story.

 And that short story was written about an early romance in my teens that I decided I wasn't really keen on the fellow anymore, but he was quite devastated. And he wrote me a love letter on a whole roll of mauve toilet paper, which I actually kept until about 5 or 10 years ago, and my husband was quite pleased to see it get cleaned out in one of our house moves.

So that was my second story. First one when I was 11 or 12, second one at 33.

**00:05:48 Annie Seaton**

After that time or in between those times: education; career; children; grandchildren; promotion; ending up a high school principal in a high school on the Mid North Coast all interfered with my desire to be an author.

The desire was still there.

I was still reading a lot. In fact, my escape from stress when I was a high school principal was to come home of an evening, run a neck deep bubble bath, have a glass of wine and I would go to my bookshelf and pull out one of my mum's Mills and Boon books.

And that was my stress relief.

And as I was reading them, I was thinking I've got to do this one day.

I could write a story.

So, fast-forward until I retired. I retired young; I was only in my 50s and I thought 'well, it's now or never.' I have the inspiration I had the desire and I decided to write a book.

**00:06:51 Annie Seaton**

So, I wrote my first book, my very first book was a little steampunk novella for a competition, and I was very upset when I didn't win. And then my second book, although that first book I did send off to publishers and I got offered a contract for it and it was actually published, but my first longer book of about 55,000 words was written for a US digital publisher back in 2012.

When they emailed me and said that they were keen to publish it and could I write another two books in the series and they paid me $200 US advance. I thought I had made it. I was really, really happy. So, I was published for the first time in March 2012 and that was *Winter of the Passion Flower* which was the steampunk novella and coincidentally *Holiday Affair* my first contemporary romance and they are both published on the same day on Amazon. Two different publishers accepted a year apart, published on the same day.

**00:08:05 Annie Seaton**

*Winter of the Passion Flower* because it was a little bit quirky. It was time travel, It was fantasy, sold, I think I made $19.00 US from that book and then when the check came in the mail a proper paper check and I took it to the bank they wanted $35 Australian to bank it.

So my first book wasn't a money spinner, but it inspired that love of writing for me.

**00:08:31 Annie Seaton**

The other book that was published the same day, *Holiday Affair,* fortuitously followed a very big bestseller. Entangled Publishing started publishing in March of 20-2012. The first book they published was an absolute runaway success, a book called *The Marriage Bargain* by Jennifer Probst. My book came out with the next four, the next month. And whether it was because it ran on the tail of that book, or because... I like to think was because of the lovely story set in Australia. It sold 1006 copies in ebook.

And with my first book in the US, I reached the top 300 books in Amazon within my first month of publication, and I was the number one Romance series author in on Amazon US, which absolutely was mind-blowing. Absolutely blew me away. So that was the start of my career.

I then had quite a few different ebooks with Entangled Publishing and I see a question up there from Ann Lee.

**00:09:40 Annie Seaton**

‘Have all my books gone to ebooks?’

Yes. All of my books are ebooks. Originally there were only ebooks. It's only since about 2014 that I now have them all in print. Some of them, probably about 10 I think, are also in audiobook and there's another four that have been translated into Portuguese, Greek and Indonesian, which is pretty exciting for someone who had their first story about a roll of toilet paper. So my ebook career went from 2012 to about 2015.

Then I was then going on a trip with Fiona McArthur and who you probably know through your libraries and through your reading and Fiona said to me that she'd heard that Pan Macmillan Australia were looking for a new romantic suspense author and did I have anything?

And I said, well, I have written 5000 words of a book that I was inspired to write, and this is going back to answering 10 years of initial question ‘what inspires me‘ we were up in Kakadu National Park, and I saw an incredible Kakadu sunset and I immediately started thinking of a novel set in that area so when Pan Macmillan were looking for a new book I sent off the first 5000 words of *Kakadu Sunset*.

Now, to get a print deal in Australia you generally have to have an agent. You have to have a well edited book and then you just throw it out there and cross your fingers and toes. So I sent it off not expecting to hear back from them again.

Fiona and I were actually in transit at Dubai International Airport on our way to Italy, where I was going to a writers retreat. (You know it's a very hard life.) I couldn't afford it, but my husband said ‘You might as well go, you've retired. Your long service leave help pay the house off. I think you should go,' so I went ‘okay’.

So, we were in Dubai International Airport and I got an email from Pan Macmillan Australia saying, ‘We really liked the sound of *Kakadu Sunset*. If we were to accept it, could you write it as part of a three book series?’ and I just went ‘Yes, yes.’

So I had to immediately come up with a synopsis for two other stories. So I came up with *Kakadu Sunset, Daintree Sunrise, and Kimberly Moon*. Right and I sent them off and on the 10th of June that year, about two weeks - three weeks later, after we were had done our writers retreat and I was in London or I woke up one morning to an email from Pan Macmillan offering me a lovely advance and a contract to publish those three books.

So that was a very, very exciting time at the beginning of my print career and *Kakadu Sunset* was published at the end of 2015 or 16 I forgot now — end of 2015 my first book in print in bookstores, and since then I've had Kakadu, *Daintree, Diamond Sky*, which were the new titles for those three books. Then *Whitsunday Dawn, Ondara, Osprey Reef* and later this year. My 4th book with Harper Collins will be published about November and it's called *East of Alice*.

So, to answer your question, Tanya, that's how it all started, and that's where the inspiration came from.

**00:13:12 Annie Seaton**

So, I'll just scroll up and look at the other questions that have appeared.

Dum de dum

That prompted me to start writing... Mauve toilet paper. Yes Kirsty, it was a romantic touch.

My books have gone to e-book, OK.

**00:13:28 Annie Seaton**

Kirsty says, ‘50 books in 10 years is astounding’.

It's actually more than 50. I actually sat down and totaled them up. With my books my ebooks, my translations, and my anthologies I'm up to 73 different entities now, which keeps me busy and I've been writing all day today book #74.

**00:13:51 Annie Seaton**

OK, Tanya, ‘what's my favorite book that I've written and why, please?’

I don't think I've got a copy of it here behind me. The second book for Entangled Publishing was called *Italian Affair.* About a year ago I got the rights back to those first three books that were published in the US in 2012. That was *A Holiday Affair, Italian Affair* and *Outback Affair*. *Italian Affair* is the story of a Scottish girl who comes to Australia seeking her birth mom.

Well, in the first chapter she sadly finds her birth mother's grave at a cemetery in Sydney and in the legal stuff that comes after her discovery, she discovers she's been left a house on an island in Italy. But to claim that house, because of the issues that her mum had throughout her life, Brianna has to have a husband. So it's a marriage of convenience novel and because Tom the hero was in *Holiday Affair* and he was a very uptight brother of the three Richards brothers.

I was able to write these absolutely two different characters and it leads to a lot of laughing, a lot of crying and Amy Andrews, who's a very well-known romance author in Australia she did the cover quote for it and she said, ‘this is a love affair that will make you laugh, cry, and sigh’.

So that's my favorite romance, and that's because of the emotion that I managed to get into it, it's my favorite book because I reread it every year. I still cry at the sad parts even though not only do I know what's going to happen. I actually wrote the story so it still tugs at my heart strings.

So, *Marry in Haste* for those of you who have got Amazon.com account is actually on special on Amazon.com for $0.99 till Friday I think. I'm not sure if it's on Amazon.com dot AU, but it's also over on my store. So, they're now called *Trouble with Paradise, Marry in Haste* and *Outback Sunrise*,

So, that was my very first series I wrote ten years ago and I still love them.

**00:16:18 Annie Seaton**

OK, Karen, ‘Do I always know how my stories and books will end before you start writing?’

I can really answer that in a very topical way at the moment, Karen.

I'm writing book 5 in the Porter Sister series, and as I said earlier, I've got a copy of the full set to give away to someone who comments tonight will draw at the end of the session. It's a murder mystery. Now, I'm well on the way to writing it. Up until yesterday I didn't even know who was going to get murdered. Up until this morning, I didn't even know who the murderer was, so I don't know how my books will end and I don't know what's going to happen.

And it's a really funny thing when you're an author, your characters lead you and often people find it hard to understand how an author gets surprised when their characters do something because they say ‘look, you're making it up’. But you find as you write a character, and as you're writing a story, your characters just take over, they become their own personalities. They do what they want to do, and that just comes out of your fingertips. And then you edit it all and you put it all together and you think, wow, I didn't know they were going to do.

That so, no, I'm totally what is called a pantser or an organic writer. And yesterday I had someone say to me on a session I was on last night, it's also the difference between being known as an architect author or a gardening author A gardener, you just get out there and do things and they grow. An architect plans and designs.

So I'm definitely in the latter camp.

**00:18:14 Annie Seaton**

Okay, 'How exciting and what a beautiful setting for my series.'

I'm very blessed. A lot of my inspiration comes from traveling around our beautiful country. My husband and I, when he was working, up until 2 1/2 years ago, he would take long service leave from his teaching job every winter on half pay, and we'd have a seven or eight week trip every winter.

So as a result of that, we have *Kakadu Sunset*, *Daintree,* *Diamond Sky, Whitsunday Dawn,* *Undara,* all the Porter sisters, the upcoming *Larapinta* the upcoming *East of Alice.* And we're heading off again this April in our caravan and who knows what the next book will be out of some lovely setting that we visit, or some mysterious idea that I get, or some ghost appears to me or some something happens. There's all sorts of inspiration.

**00:19:14 Annie Seaton**

So, Ann Lee asks, ‘Do I use the same editor for all of my books?’

 With my — to explain I'm classed as what is known as a hybrid author. A hybrid author is someone who has a foot in a different publishing area. So a lot of people are simply traditionally published for example, my books with Harper Collins on the books that appear in Big W and Kmart and Target and bookstores, either in August or November of every year.

My Entangled Publishing books, which I think I still have five books with them are available in ebook on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Apple and all of those retailers as well as in print on demand. You can all order them on those different places and they print on demand.

The third sort of publishing that I do is my indie publishing career, and that's where I have my own store where I sell not only my own print books, but the publisher currently allows me to sell the publishers books on my store because people can get a signed copy.

And I also stock copies of the Entangled Publishing books. So pretty much all of my books are available on my store which you can visit at annieseaton.net/store.html. Or you can just go to annieseaton.net and see it on the menu. If you are a print reader and you'd like to purchase some print books off my store if you join my Facebook readers group, which is called Annie Seaton Readers Group, you get a 15% discount on any purchase.

So that's the three different ways that I publish and to go back to Ann’s question, the publisher of my traditionally published books, they choose the editor, and they choose the proofreader. And the edits are sent to me, and I send them back to the editor.

As far as my Entangled Publishing books and I haven't published anything with them now for about three or four years, because I much prefer to go down the independently published track, because when you’re with the US publisher they want you to use US spelling, US terminology and I can always tell the funny story about my Pickle Creek series which is set out in the Pilliga scrub in New South Wales and when the US editor edited the stories she had to ask me what the words meant. What was a scone? What was an RSL? What was an esky? What was a dam? What was a bore?

And I realized that it's lovely to have an American audience, but a lot of the terminology went way over their heads so they got around it by putting a glossary in the back of my Australian books explaining what these terms meant.

So, one memory I have of that is with *Outback Affair*, which has now been published as *Outback Sunrise* and I've been able to change all of the American spelling to the Australian spelling. I got the most dreadful reviews from Australian readers because the American editor wouldn't let me change trailer park to caravan park and so many Australian readers said, ‘Who is this person calling them trailer park?’, and what they didn't realize is when you sign a contract, you have to do what the editor says. So that's another reason I like to do independent publishing.

**00:23:05 Annie Seaton**

Now again, to get back to Ann's question. My independently published books, yes, are all edited by the same editor and she does a fabulous job. And after they’re edited I have a proofreader who does all the proofreading for them as well, and I'm delighted to say that I got an email back from my editor today and she's read *Larapinta* over the last 24 hours and she told me it's the best book yet out of the Porter Sisters series. So, you might have seen my posts on the rural fiction group and my readers group this afternoon. I was absolutely delighted to read that.

So, yeah, that answers Ann’s question.

Oh, thank you Kirsty. She's put the link up to my website.

**00:23:53 Annie Seaton**

‘How much input do I have in the cover?’ Nola, I'm assuming you mean to *Osprey Reef,* which is the book we're talking about tonight.

When you're with a publisher, they will send you a cover concept. Their graphic designer designs the cover and they have a lot of marketing gurus in the publishing side of things who know what sells. The first copy of *Osprey Reef* that came to me, and it's behind me here, I absolutely loved because that's scene with the blue waters of Hill Inlet in the Whitsundays from the lookout, the blue water and the blue sky, was exactly what I had in mind.

The only thing I wasn't sure about was the yellow font, I think for my name, on the front. Yes, my name is in yellow font and I'm not a yellow person so I ran it by my readers group and my editor who all said yellow pops. So I took their advice.

**00:25:04 Annie Seaton**

The only cover I wasn't real fussed on from the publisher was *Undara,* and there's 50/50 on that. I thought it was a very dark cover. Got a copy of it here for those of you who haven't seen it. It is a sad book. It's about a woman recovering from a tragic event in her life and how she copes with grief, so I suppose the dark cover goes with that.

I've also had a lot of readers who've said that they loved the cover. I've also had a lot of readers who've said ‘look, it's not a book I'd look at on the bookshelves’ so it's quite hard when you're an author and not a marketing person to put your trust in that they know that the cover’s right.

But *Osprey Reef* I love. *Whitsunday Dawn* I loved, and I'm looking forward to getting *East of Alice* later in the year.

As far as my covers, Nola, for my independent books or I do them all myself.

My Kakadu, *Daintree, Diamond Sky, Larapinta,* all of my little romances I designed my own covers. I've got a lot of technology skills from when I was a computing studies teacher and I find that working with graphics gives me a downtime from producing words at the end of the day. So yeah, lots of lots of input into those covers.

**00:26:35 Annie Seaton**

Tanya, ‘Do I also write historical fiction?’

Okay, in my first business meeting with Entangled Publishing I actually was very fortunate and I got to go over to Las Vegas a couple of years after *Holiday Affair* was published and I met my American editor and at that stage I was wanting to experiment in a few different genres and I can always remember that she said to me, ‘No, you are a contemporary romance author. Do not go into other genres, your readers won't follow you.’ And sadly, I took that advice for the first couple of years but then my desire to write other stories and those people in my head were wanting to have their stories told. So I branched out.

Since that time, I've written my first steampunk novel. I've probably done 25 or 30 contemporary romances. I've written a book called *The Emerald Necklace*, about a pirate in New Orleans in the late 1700s, and it's one of my favorite books. I've written a witchy book. *Silver Valley Witch* is one of my favorite books. It’s a little novella set in Connecticut about a witch and a warlock and a country and western singer. It just came to me one day and I wrote that in a couple of days.

I've written my dual-timeline historicals ranging from World War Two, the 1930s. I've done a time travel series where the first book goes back to 1971. The next two books go back to the 15th century and the 4th book is set in Victorian times in the 19th century. What other genres of I missed? Some, um, lots of outback books set in Australian Outback.

**00:28:25 Annie Seaton**

So yes, to answer Tanya, I write historical fiction.

I'd look out for the *Emerald Necklace* and the love across time series if you like your historical fiction. Plus, *Whitsunday Dawn, Undara* is also a dual timeline, as is *Osprey Reef*.

**00:28:46 Annie Seaton**

Okay, Nola, great question.

‘Does my husband give me plot ideas?’

**00:28:51 Annie Seaton**

Not so much does he give me the ideas, but he helps me solve the problems like writing *Osprey Reef* I had a couple of things, for those of you who have read it, some plot things where I needed something to happen so that the plot would move on.

**00:29:11 Annie Seaton**

And because he's a real mariner, he's got all these — as well as being a teacher he's got his maritime qualifications — and the book that, the boat that *Osprey Reef* was based on the *Elizabeth E2* is actually owned by our nephew and my husband goes out sometimes as a love job and helps our nephew as a deckie.

**00:29:34 Annie Seaton**

He goes out on fishing charters out off Mackay, and he was actually the main research person to go out to Osprey reef. So he is responsible for all the descriptions of the underwater scenes and the canyons and all of the things that happened there.

But as well as giving me those ideas, he's also the one when I have a problem and say, ‘Well I need this to happen, and I've got this happening, how am I going to get this sorted?’ and he's like, ‘Oh, that's easy. You'll just do this this, this and this.’ And I sit there and type as he tells me that so I always acknowledge him in the front of my books for being there for me because I think I would still be stuck in the middle of the 5th book if he didn't solve those hairy plot ideas.

**00:30:21 Annie Seaton**

Okay, ‘Did the Porter Sister series come from personal experience?’

It came from personal experience in terms of the places that I'd been and my dismay at what happens in so many places to our Australian environment. We were actually up in Kakadu when I got the idea from the Kakadu sunset. We're out of sunset cruise on yellow water and as we traveled up to Kakadu I was listening to ABC Radio and I was listening to the situation in the Bylong Valley — for those of you who don't know it, in between the top of the Hunter Valley and Mudgee, where Eddie Obeid and Ian MacDonald, who are now serving jail sentences for the corruption there.

And that was on the radio. And when we're up at Kakadu sunset, I got to thinking it was such a pristine environment What would happen if someone wanted to do that, if there was corruption in government and someone wanted to do those sorts of things in Kakadu National Park? So, not so much a personal experience but a community minded experience about my fear of what could happen there.

**00:31:45 Annie Seaton**

The same thing happened in *Whitsunday Dawn*. It was based on the premise of what would happen if someone wanted to put a coal loader in the middle of this beautiful island setting. And then *Osprey Reef*, I won't give away the spoilers for those of you that haven't read it, but what would happen? What does actually happen out in the ocean?

And you'll find a common theme in a lot of my books is I like to focus on the lack of trust, integrity, and truth in government and corporations. I mean, I know there's a lot of good people and a lot of honest people out there, but there's a lot of things happen in our country that need attentiondrawn to them and I like to think through fiction that I can just raise awareness of what is happening to some of our lovely environments.

**00:32:45 Annie Seaton**

So, Porter Sisters from personal experience, that was *Kakadu Sunset.* *Daintree*... Uhm, yes we went up to the Daintree and we visited it. And yes, I saw all those snakes that appeared in that story. I hate snakes so it was very scary writing those snake scenes in *Daintree.*

*Diamond Sky* we actually flew into the diamond mine at, um, the Argyle Diamond Mine that Rio Tinto, uh, Rio Tinto owned and coincidentally, my heroine in *Diamond Sky* was a rehabilitation engineer and at the time that I wrote that about, Drew Porter being part of getting the mine back to the traditional owners of the land and rehabilitating the landscape I had no idea that the Argyle Diamond mine was about to close.

So it was a very topical thing. I keep saying I must have ESP because when I wrote *Kakadu Sunset*, there was a big fracking scandal not long after I wrote it. *Diamond Sky*, they rehabilitated the mine. *Daintree, t*here was some wildlife smuggling that came to the New Years as my book was published.

**00:34:01 Annie Seaton**

And *Osprey Reef*. There was a big article about what was happening out at Osprey Reef about, I think I was halfway through edits and my editor wrote to me and said, ‘Hey, you know all this stuff,’ and I said ‘Just happens’. It's coincidental.

So, *East of Alice, w*e'll have to wait and see what happens there.

**00:34:20 Annie Seaton**

So, thank you Karen. She's applied for the readers group. I'll accept that when I get offline. Carol, great. Coralie, sorry, I'll join you up as well.

**00:34:31 Annie Seaton**

‘How much input to the cover?’

‘The Outback series, the covers look fantastic.’

**00:34:38 Annie Seaton**

I'm so excited about the Augathella Girls books. *Outback Roads*, which is Kelly’s story, comes out in 12 days. It's been up for pre-order for four months and yesterday it broke my record for pre-orders, so I'm excited about it and readers are obviously looking forward to it.

It's also going to be available in print, and they're actually on the way to me from Melbourne at the moment, so I'll have print copies ready to send out to my print readers, hopefully by about Monday or Tuesday of next week. So they'll get first dibs at *Outback Roads,* the nanny story, before it comes out in ebook. Then the other two books are well underway.

So, um, ‘How similar?’ oh hang on we go back.

**00:35:30 Annie Seaton**

‘What was the name of the Emerald pirate one again?’

It's called *The Emerald Necklace,* Karen. You can find that on ebook or you can find it on my store on my website.

**00:35:45 Annie Seaton**

Nola, great question.

‘How similar are the *Stella* and the real-life *Elizabeth* boats?’

**00:35:52 Annie Seaton**

The only difference between the two boats is the names. For those of you who have read the book you can go probably, if you go back to my Facebook page or you can go to the *Elizabeth E2* Facebook page, I have put up photos of the wheelhouse where — for those of you again who've read the book — where Matt shoved his chocolate wrappers; where the little bowl was with the paper clips in it; the stairwell where there was an incident where the Hostess had some problems with the sheets and some smelly see life.

The stairs actually open up in the *Elizabeth E2*. The storage; the lifeboats; the saloon where Peter sits and does all of his research; the hatch where the chef can talk to people in the saloon: absolutely all accurate, as is the map that I have up on the wall in *Stella Marie — Lady Stella*, sorry, *Lady Stella 2 —* is the same map that is in the *Elizabeth E2.* And I was very fortunate to be able to use it because as I said, our nephew owns that boat and I sent him off a copy, and if you read the acknowledgements there’s an acknowledgement to them for taking me on a trip, so I learned how to drive the boat.

**00:37:17 Annie Seaton**

Okay, ‘I saw the cover to *The Emerald Necklace*.’

‘Good on me for branching out.’

**00:37:23 Annie Seaton**

Oh, ‘Did Elly Gooch, who did the map for my book, do any of the maps or the pictures for my other books?’

Let's talk about that map. Those of you who've got a print copy of *Osprey Reef,* when my author copies arrived about a month before it hit the shops I was absolutely, so disappointed. If you have a look at the map in the front of the book, the ink has leached into the map and it's very dark and it's nothing like the map that was drawn at the time.

My publisher was disappointed too, but because the copies had all been printed, it won't be changed until the book goes to reprint. So, poor Elly, who did a wonderful job, I think she was a little bit disappointed as well.

Elly is a daughter of our friend who's a local girl here and doing a degree up in Armadale. She did the map for *Osprey Reef*. She did the map for *Undara*. The other map that I've got — the other two maps in *Daintree* and *Diamond Sky* were done by Elizabeth Claire Smith who was our daughter in law.

So, all Nambucca girls who did the maps, and I'm just about to grab one of them to do the map for *Larapinta* so that will need to be done in the next couple of weeks.

**00:38:55 Annie Seaton**

So, oh wow, I think I've been through all the questions so let me talk a little bit about *Osprey Reef*. Oop, there's a new message come in – hmm, where are we?

Oh, thank you Kirsty, noting down the commentators so help me do the draw at the end up.

**00:39:18 Annie Seaton**

*Osprey Reef* came to me because I have such a love for the Whitsunday Islands. I love where I live here on the mid North Coast of New South Wales. We live close to the beach. We've got beautiful beaches. We have a lovely climate, but my second favorite place in the world is the Whitsunday Islands.

We tend to end up there every winter. Wherever we do our trip, we always come home via the Whitsundays and one of the best things that I love to do out there is to get on a boat and cruise around those beautiful islands, look at the blue water. So it just comes naturally to me to write stories that will help preserve that beautiful environment.

**00:40:04 Annie Seaton**

*Osprey Reef* came to me when our nephew asked Ian to go out and help him on a trip, about four years ago, I think it was. And it was a three-week trip and I stayed home alone working while he went up to Mackay and then steamed up to Cook Town and then out to Osprey Reef and got to go diving and got to help the fisherman on that boat.

At the same time, I heard about them doing a scientific expedition to Willis Island with the Bureau of Meteorology, and that's when I started to get the inspiration about a scientific trip. And a couple of years earlier I had edited a book for a young lady— Of course, as well as doing my own writing for my 3 different sorts of publishing and doing covers, I also have an editing business and I love working with other authors and I love working with aspiring authors to help them establish their careers.

So, I had a young lady who knew our nephew who had been a deckie and a skipper up in Queensland a few years ago and she had written a book called *Some Sailors Do Wear Skirts* and I was absolutely fascinated by her take on what it was like to be a female skipper in a very male oriented maritime industry.

**00:41:37 Annie Seaton**

So, when I thought of my story, and my historical story, and my environmental aspect, and set on Stella, I emailed Courtney and I asked her permission to use her as my inspiration for Bethany. She was delighted and she appears in the acknowledgements, and I was really pleased about two weeks ago to get an email from her to tell me that just over Christmas gone she has finally self-published her books.

So if you're an ebook reader, go on to Amazon and look for a book called Some Sailors Do Wear Skirts by Courtney Henson and you'll see where a lot of my inspiration came from Bethany and what it was like to be a female skipper in a male world, and you'll see a lot of the stories I wrote about Bethany up in the Gulf actually have a factual basis.

00:42:38 Annie Seaton

So, Nola, ‘How was the research? How hard was the research regarding the Chinese antiques?’

Well, that was pure fiction on my part. That came from when I was in the wheelhouse of the *Lizzie,* saying to the skipper who was taking me on the trip, ‘What does that do? What are you doing now? Who are you calling now on the radio? Why are you touching that button?’ and seeing the actual counter of the wheelhouse that had chocolate wrappers and bowls and things like that on it, which gave me the inspiration for having the men being the messy skippers and Bethany being the tidy one. And there was actually a bowl there, but of course it was probably a $2 shop bowl.

But that's where I started to get the idea about what if there was something valuable and they didn't know where it had come from. And then I read the articles, or the the book by, and I've forgotten his name about the East Coast of Australia being discovered well before Captain Cook.

**00:43:47 Annie Seaton**

Now this is a non-proven scientific — it's a non-proven historical premise that Admiral Zheng He and his Chinese junks came and discovered the East Coast of Australia back in the 16th century, and it was a very fascinating read. They say there are some maps in the National Library that proved that theory, but it's very much popular history and it's not recognized as accurate, so the combination of reading about that and putting the bowls together gave me the idea about the hidden treasure in Osprey. So, it sort of came together as a bit of everything, and readers seem to be enjoying it.

So, I don't know how many of you guys have read it yet. So, keep an eye out for it if you haven't.

**00:44:43 Annie Seaton**

So, how are we going with questions here? I think I've answered all the questions. If anyone else has any more questions, please type them in.

**00:44:57 Annie Seaton**

So, *Osprey Reef* came out in November and I've got the *Augathella Girls* book one coming out on the 15th of February, then *Larapinta* the 5th book in the Porter series comes out on the 25th of March in print and ebook — they both are. Then in April there is the 2nd book in the *Augathella Girls* series called *Outback Sky* about a pilot.

Then in May there will be the 4th book in the *Shorts and Sweets Seasons* series that I do with Suzanne Bellamy. That'll be out in May, and then June will be the third book in the *Augathella Girls,* and then there's another five of those to come out over the next 12 months after that.

However, come April we're heading off to outback Queensland, so I'm trying to get all of this work done before we go away. So... 'cause I promised my husband I won't work on the computer in the caravan nonstop like I usually do.

**00:46:10 Annie Seaton**

So, that's true. ‘You never know where inspiration can come from. A bowl with a bit of fluff and a chocolate wrapper in it gets a story going.’

**00:46:19 Annie Seaton**

Tanya, ‘what do I enjoy reading?’

OK, I love reading and since Christmas I've been really making the time to read because if I don't put aside my work, I'll tend to work till 10:00 or 11:00 o'clock every night. And then if I try and read in bed, it's just straight to sleep.

So, when I do read, I like reading Australian rural fiction. We have some wonderful authors and we've got — for those of you who are not members we have Australian and New Zealand Rural Fiction Facebook group that Dairy Fraser and I run. And associated with that, we've got the Australian — I think it's Australia — australianruralfiction.com website where on the front page of that website we keep it up to date with all of the latest rural fiction books coming out every month.

**00:47:21 Annie Seaton**

And then there is a page with our authors and we've just put out 100 — 101 authors, Australian rural fiction authors up on that website at the moment, which is fantastic. So come on over and join the Australian and New Zealand Rural fiction site to keep up to date.

Plus, there's also for those of you who've come in later my Annie Seaton Readers Group on Facebook as well.

**00:47:46 Annie Seaton**

So, ‘did I have to research sea creatures for accuracy and facts?’

Yes, Nola, I did. I found out all those fascinating facts about the sea cucumbers in Osprey Reef. The trepang fishing or the beche dem mer as they called it back in the 1920s and 30s was an absolutely accurate industry at the time, and when I do my research I go back to primary sources which are original documents and original reports back from those times, which gives it a much more authentic feel because you're actually drawing on those sources of that time.

**00:48:36 Annie Seaton**

So I read the original ones about trepang fishing and I also did the current research, and that's when I discovered that the sea cucumbers that Peter was ostensibly researching out at Osprey Reef as part of his research that the sea cucumbers are actually vital to the preservation of the Great Barrier Reef, so that was, uh, a serendipitous fact that I stumbled upon and was able to use in the book.

**00:49:10 Annie Seaton**

So, uhm, thank you, Faye: ‘Congratulations on a continuous success.’

**00:49:16 Annie Seaton**

It is... It's... Whoever thought that a young girl in Brisbane in 1967 who wrote a book in an exercise book with lead pencil and wanted to be an author would be sitting here tonight talking to people all over Australia about her 60 or 70 something books. It's just an absolute dream come through true for me.

And the best part for me is that people are reading my stories — some when I wrote my first book in 2011. I can remember giving it to a friend of mine in the writers group that I joined here in the Nambucca Valley and it was like handing over my firstborn. I was absolutely terrified that someone was reading what had come out of my mind and my heart.

Now I'm saying ‘oh, I've only sold 5000 copies of that book. That's not very good.’ So, you go from that ownership and being scared to really appreciating that people read your stories and enjoy them and I love getting emails.

I get a couple of emails every day from someone who’s just read *Osprey Reef* or *Undara* and tells me how much they enjoyed it. So that's very validating for an author. So, if you read all those books and they've got an email in the back, don't hesitate to email them and tell them what you thought of it.

**00:50:44 Kirsty**

Thank you everyone for watching. We stopped the video just before the ending there so we could draw the competition.

So thank you so much, Annie, for your generosity there, and thank you so much for coming and visiting with us at Wyndham. It was lovely having you, and we learned a lot about your writing and your books. I'm sure everyone watching this is now gone out and bought some books or reserved them at the library. You can search for them on our catalog and put a hold on, so thank you so much everyone and