

# Bemidji author pens crime caper

PATT RALL BEMIDJI PIONEER THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012 - 2:09AM

BEMIDJI – One of Joanna Shelquist Dymond’s first jobs was making popcorn and ushering at the Pic Theater, an Art Deco building in Bagley. She watched every movie that came to town.

Her most recent job is that of an author. The 74-year-old Bemidji woman has written “Crazy as a Loon,” a crime caper with many characters and lots of humor.

“I wanted to write a book about this area,” said Dymond, “the whole northwest of Minnesota where I stayed on until I was 18. I set the book in 1989 and researched my book carefully: forensics, gardening, photography, real estate sales and ambulance protocol. I wanted to be as accurate as possible.” It has taken Dymond two years to write “Crazy as a Loon.” Not many people write in this genre, and Dymond used her contacts in Sisters in Crime and The Loft Literary Center as mentors and readers during the 200 or so revisions.

One of the readers was Mary Logue, a mystery writer and author of “Point No Point,” who penned, “I was very impressed by the deep sense of setting in ‘Crazy as a Loon,’ the fullness of her characters, and the humor she infused the mystery with.”

Dymond’s first book signing will take place from 3-5 p.m. Saturday at Brigid’s Pub in downtown Bemidji. Laura Dehler-Setter will be master of ceremony for the 3:30 p.m. program.

Dymond will welcome classmates from Bagley’s class of 1956 and the people who were supportive at Arrow Printing. Lee Kontur, an 83-year-old poet from Bagley who penned the poem, “I Am A Loon” in 1996, will be brought to the event by the staff of the nursing home where he now resides. Dymond is excited to have Kontur hear his poem being read aloud at the gathering.

Dymond is also looking forward to see colleagues from Toastmasters International and friends from Bemidji and environs. Music will be provided by the “Singing Tell Sisters,” Kristi Miller and Miriam Tell on the mandolin and guitar.

“Most readers think that Dyanna Dahlberg is me, but she is not,” Dymond said about one of the characters in “Crazy as a Loon.”

“I had a career in broadcasting, but this is not my story. I have already started my second book with the same lead character, W.D. Caldwell, a real estate broker from Erskine who works undercover for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension here in Minnesota. I plan a series of three books with Caldwell as the main character.”

Dymond already has dates set for book signings in Rochester, many small towns in southern Minnesota and Book World stores starting in January of 2013.

The early years

A fire in Bagley destroyed almost half of the town in January of 1957 and took the life of Dymond’s best friend, Sharon Day.

*continued*

Dymond was so distraught and unhappy at the loss of her friend that her mother said the best thing was for her to move elsewhere.

“Mother drove me to Bemidji and she put me on a Greyhound Bus at the terminal in the Markham Hotel,” said Dymond. “I went to Minneapolis to live with my aunt, and I got a job out in Wayzata within the first few days of being there.”

That was only the first step in the adventures of the 1956 Bagley High School graduate that eventually brought her back to her roots. In 1996, Dymond left her job as creative services director for the then Metromedia TV station – WNEW out of New York. The station now functions as a FOX affiliate. Dymond was responsible for the promotion of the groundbreaking adult soap opera “Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman,” produced by Norman Lear and starring Louise Lasser for two seasons in the late 1970s.

Dymond returned to Minnesota and entered the graduate program at Bemidji State University for a degree in English.

“I really wanted to go back to school then because Will Weaver was still teaching at BSU,” said Dymond. She graduated in 2004.

A chance discovery in the library at an ashram in the Bahamas led Dymond on a new quest: reading all she could about mystery writer Agatha Christie. She has a collection of all of Christie’s books and has read more than 1,000 mysteries. Dymond reads five books a week, and, at least, three of them are mysteries. Dymond has donated at least 500 mystery books to the library. Her favorite mystery writers change with the author she is reading at the time; Charles Todd is her current favorite.