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First time author LaRene Ellis finds a book within her

MATT JAMES, Record staff

LaRene Ellis said she never really intended to write a book, let alone a whole series of them. But an interesting sequence of events pushed the Summit County-born Ellis into the situation where she became an author. "About four years ago, I sold all my inventory as a real-estate broker," said Ellis. Her intent, she said, was to get out of the business and find something else to do.

But shortly after that happened, before she had started anything else on her plate, she was struck with a bad cold. That left her laid up for days, leaving her unable to talk or get out of the house. Ellis' motivation for starting to write was, she said, "being bored out of my gourd."

So one day she sat down at her computer and began to type.

"I thought, 'I wonder if I could write a story about something I know,'" she said. So her task started easily enough, but then it began to expand. She said she ended up writing full-time for the next four years.

Originally, Ellis said she intended the manuscript to be a screenplay, but her children and grandkids started pushing her to make it into a novel. She relented, and "Stones' Quest" was born. The first book in the series, "Stones' Quest: In Search of its Master" was released in October, 2004.

"It's for ages 10-17, and I think boys might enjoy it a little more," said Ellis.

She said she made it a children's book because of the lack of science fiction writing for kids recently.

"You can't find brand new stuff that's in that genre," she said.

"You could easily make it an adult book," she continued. "But I decided to make it for kids."

"I have a rule, that if my kids can't watch it, I can't watch it," said Ellis about movies. So, as she was writing the book and letting her children and grandchildren read it, she said that following that rule only made sense.

The series follows the story of the search for four mystical stones, which give the "Master of the Galaxy" his power. Set in the fictional and civil war-embroiled Ellisarius Galaxy, the first story follows an I-Force commander who rescues a young boy from a battle and finds himself as the keeper of the boy and the secret he contains in his pocket.

Ellis said she chose to set the book in a completely fictional setting to avoid the trappings of realism.

"It just seemed like the right thing at the time," said Ellis. "Then you didn't have to worry about history or anything like that."

Ellis said that making a story populated by humans but set in a place entirely apart from the Earth served two purposes. In the entirely fantastical setting, she said she hoped her readers could more easily suspend their sense of disbelief. By using humans, she could still deal with human

issues such as finding one's place in the world (or series of worlds) and how people solve their problems.

The best part of the experience of writing the books, said Ellis, has been seeing children react to them.

"It's really rewarding when you have the kids get excited about it," she said.

To that end, Ellis has been working to make her book more accessible to kids. Recently, her publishing company, Gathering Place Publishers, announced that she was donating 300 copies of "Stones' Quest: In Search of its Master" to 40 Utah school districts and all six branches of the Salt Lake City Library.

For Ellis, who grew up in Coalville and Wanship and now lives in Farmington, Utah, it was a chance to contribute something to the Utah school system.

"I've just lived here my whole life," she said, "and this is a great chance to give back to the schools."

[Photo: Stones Quest author LaRene Ellis and the books she will be donating to the Utah Public Schools.](#)

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