

OC Woman Follows Her Urge To Wr.

By ARMAND HANSON

When Susanna Howe, a youthful Laguna Hills housewife, got the urge to write a book a couple of years ago no one in their right mind would have given a nickel for her chance of achieving success. She didn't have too much going for her: not only couldn't she type, but she had never written anything for publication, not even a letter to the editor.

But when one of her neighbors brought in a copy of Rosemary Rogers "Sweet Savage Love" it changed everything. The book sparked an interest in historical romances for Mrs. Howe. She read a few more. They challenged her imagination and she decided to write one of her own.

And, on Nov. 1 of last year her book, "Fever Moon," appeared on paperback display racks across the United States.

It doesn't always happen that way. America's publishers are turning out an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 books annually. However, for every book published there

are an estimated 100 manuscripts that are rejected.

Mrs. Howe's manuscript, however, was not rejected.

Once she had decided to attempt writing a novel, Mrs. Howe began to focus her enthusiasm. She came up with a story setting and had an idea how long the story would be, how it would start and how it would end.

The first task after that was research. Mrs. Howe checked all the details from history that she would need for the story

setting and then — with the locale, dates, plot and story line determined — outlined the chapters. Once all that had been accomplished, she was ready to start writing.

"Fever Moon" is the story of Desiree LeClare who is swept from her homeland by the bitter wars of Napoleon and blossoms into young womanhood on the lush plantations of old Louisiana. In the book it is a single kiss from the notorious pirate Jean Lafitte who teaches Desiree the real meaning of her name.

And, although it was the kiss of the buccaneer-smuggler, who lived on an is-

The Register
ORANGE COUNTY

Leisuretime

Sunday, March 11, 1979

1558 3311
135 12311

ite A Novel

land paradise beyond the bayous, that taught the heroine the meaning of love, she was destined to marry another.

"Fever Moon" is as tumultuous and tender as Lafitte and Desiree's love for each other. The climax of the novel, skillfully blended with imaginary characters and real historical characters, ends in an exuberantly satisfying finale.

"One of the major scenes, actually, the big sex scene of the book, was written early," Mrs. Howe explains. "I knew where I wanted it to occur. So I wrote that first. Then, when the time came to use it, I merely inserted the pages in the manuscript. The rest of the book I wrote chapter by chapter."

Writing the book sort of became a neighborhood project. One neighbor, for all practical purposes, served as the midwife for the book, reading the first handwritten drafts, editing, making suggestions and offering comments. Following this the manuscript went to another neighbor for typing.

(Continued On Page 4)



Neighbors Aided Laguna Hills Author Working On Her Novel

(Continued From Page 1)

While this work was in progress Mrs. Howe wrote letters to six publishing houses she thought might be interested in her book. She asked for information about how to submit her manuscript, which she estimated would be ready in a few months.

From the replies Mrs. Howe decided to send the manuscript to Jove Publications in New York. She knew they published a large number of historical romances. And she also had a name to which she could forward her letter, outline, and three sample chapters, as per the request. Jove liked what they saw and sent for the completed manuscript.

"They published it without any alterations," she said.

Although she goes by the name of Susie, the author's name on the cover is Susanna Howe. "I liked the three syllable sound, and the editors agreed," she explained.

Mrs. Howe is a totally undisciplined writer. She has no work habits. Or, as she puts it, "My work habits are non-existent. I work when I feel like it, sometimes late at night, and when the children are in school. The only consistent habit I observe is not to work on weekends, and when my family is home."

Her family consists of husband Hal, a wholesale food distributor, stepson Kirk, 16, and daughter Amy, 9. They enjoy spending most weekends camping, traveling to places like Mexico and Yosemite.

Mrs. Howe is a voracious reader. She is a World War II buff and William Golden is her favorite author, with Jack Higgins a close second. She says she belongs to every book club known, and her personal library is quite extensive. Every available wall in the Howe home is lined with book shelves that are crowded with volumes, all of

which she claims to have read. Many additional books are stored in the garage.

Her interest in reading was stimulated a great extent by her father, Bruce Mosey, a naval officer, who made the study words fascinating for Mrs. Howe as far back as she can remember. "Every day I would select a word from the dictionary. He would give me the word in the morning and each evening I would have to put it proper use in a sentence. Slang expressions were forbidden. It was an experience I'll never forget. And I appreciate it no more than ever."

Born in Santa Monica 32 years ago, Mr. Howe attended schools in Arizona, Florida, California, Tennessee and Hawaii, the moves being dictated by her father's career. She graduated from high school in Van Nuys and continued her education at Valley Junior College in North Hollywood, majoring in sociology with a minor in English.

Her interest in words has paid off for author Susanna Howe. Jove officially showed the confidence they had in "Fever Moon" by printing 225,000 copies in their initial press run. While not a record, it compares favorably with Jacqueline Susann's "Love Machine," which enjoyed an initial press run of 230,000. And that was after Susann's "Every Night Josephine" had sold 1.7 million copies in paperback plus 35,000 in hardcover.

Susanna Howe's success attracted New York-based agent. And now she is hard at work on her next novel, another historical romance. Set in the Civil War period, it involves a young girl who migrates to Colorado, then, prior to the outbreak of the war, moves to Atlanta. She remains there until it burns during the war. While the title has not been decided upon, it is tentatively called "Out of the Flames."