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### **Welch Put Her First Book on the Shelves; Novel Asks What if Last Survivors of the Anasazi were found Today**

The Vail Trail

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## Welch puts her first book the on shelves

### Novel asks what if last survivors of the Anasazi were found today

By **KATHY HEICHER**

Have you ever finished a book with the thought: "Why don't I write a book?"

Shirley Welch of Lake Creek has. After dabbling in fiction for the last eight years, has signed a contract to publish a mainstream novel. The book should be on the shelves next summer.

"You get used to rejection from publishers. This gives some credibility to my eight-year 'hobby,'" says a proud Welch.

The soon-to-be-published book is entitled *The Last Anasazi*. Welch describes the book as contemporary fiction focusing on what could happen if one last surviving tribe of Anasazi Indians were found in the 1990s. The Anasazi (Navajo for Ancient Ones) were the people who built and inhabited the cliff dwellings of the Four Corners region of Colorado, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico between 1190 and 1300. Then the tribe, for still uncertain reasons, left the area.

Welch's novel is set in New Mexico, in the Farmington area, although in a fictional town. The hero is a yuppie

geologist from the West Coast who discovers a lost canyon of Anasazi ruins, and with it finds a trio of the last surviving Anasazi people: a grandmother, grandfather, and their granddaughter.

The author promises that the novel has a good mix of history and romance. The book industry defines "mainstream"

novels as books that appeal to a general audience of both sexes.

"It's a good story, and somewhat plausible," says Welch, adding that readers will come away with a little bit of knowledge about the Anasazi that they may not have known before.

Welch has contracted with Northwest Publishing of Salt Lake City to print 10,000 copies of the book. Her manuscript is 400 pages, and the printed product will be a "trade size" book, slightly larger than a normal paperback book.

Welch acted as her own agent in marketing the book to a publisher. She said the Salt Lake City Company is a logical choice because of the interest in Anasazi history in the area.

The 46-year-old author estimates that she worked on the book for five years (while also working on other novels and tending to her family). She researched the story by making several trips to the Mesa Verde cliff dwellings, and by reading the biographies of Richard

Wetherill who, along with Charlie Mason, is credited with being the first Caucasian to see the ruins at Mesa Verde.

The author describes her writing as a sort of "type and go" method. She starts off her novels with a general idea, rather than a detailed story outline.

"The plot is sort of on the tip of my fingers," Welch explains, adding that sometimes she doesn't know how the story will end until she gets through with the rough draft.

Welch started writing fiction while operating a gourmet candy and ice cream store in Beaver Creek when the resort first opened. The village was quiet and business was slow in the first years of the resort, and Welch filled up the slow hours with writing. Welch sold the candy shop in 1990, and began devoting more time to her writing "hobby". She has completed about a dozen novels; but *The Last Anasazi* is her first publishing contract. She is

involved in ongoing negotiations with publishers on some of her other works.

Welch said this week her next goal is to sell a novel to a major publishing house.

Meanwhile, while she awaits the printing of her first published novel, she's working on another book.

"It's an addiction," she admits.



After churning out romance novels for several years, Shirley Welch has a contract to publish a book. This time, however, she's written a novel that has a geologist finding the last remaining Anasazi holed up in a canyon near Farmington, N.M. File photo by John Hankammer.