

ELIZABETH LETTS

Rising Author Balances Parenthood, Work and Written Word

As a full-time mother of four and part-time nurse-midwife, Elizabeth Letts continues to find time to write.

The second book from this rising author is a medical drama called FAMILY PLANNING (Penguin/New American Library) due in bookstores in March. Letts is a firm believer that with discipline and determination, parenting, part-time work and writing can be balanced. The graduate of Yale and the Yale School of Nursing is leading by example.

“Discipline is the key,” said Letts. “You can’t twiddle your thumbs. You can’t get writer’s block. You can always go back and edit. But the writing time you’ve set aside in your family and work life is important. Writing time should be spent putting words on paper.”

Letts’ writing area consists of a computer table in the dining room’s corner of her home on the outskirts of Philadelphia. She faces the kitchen “so I can keep an eye on what’s going on. It seems to be where the kids congregate.”

She schedules her writing times for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday...days when she’s at home. She also squeezes in laundry and house cleaning.

Any mom who aspires to write can take their cue from Letts. “You can do it,” she said. “As a parent and worker you have a full plate already. But if you really want to do it you have to make time for it. I try not to write when the three older kids (13, 10 and 8) come home from school. “

Letts and her husband understood that delving into the unsure waters of authorship meant a change in lifestyle. Her full-time job became part-time work. “In the start my husband and kids were more curious than supportive,” she explained. “I would have been, too. It’s a big jump. But now my husband is very supportive and the kids are proud of me.”

She has followed the axiom “write what you know.” The setting for FAMILY PLANNING is a not-for-profit women’s health center in her home state of Pennsylvania and the lead character is nurse practitioner Charlotte Hopper. Like the character, Letts works in a not-for-profit women’s health

center. The background allows Letts to base her writing on what she terms as “real medical situations.”

The main character in her first book, *QUALITY OF CARE*, is a female obstetrician in what has been called “an absorbing story of birth and rebirth.” The debut novel was a selection of Literary Guild, Doubleday Book Club, Rhapsody Book Club and Dear Reader Library Book Club.

Letts says beginning authors can work through their fears when writing the first manuscript. “I was a little intimidated by the process and thought that if you were not an insider you didn’t have a chance,” she recalled. “But I think it’s an industry where they still evaluate you on your writing. I sure didn’t have any connections. I didn’t know a soul.”

Elizabeth Letts is proof you can have it all.