

Gwen's tapestry unfolds

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Gwen Wilson has written a book. It's the story about her younger years – the journey that has made her the woman she is today.

I Belong to No One is its title and it's a book Gwen started writing in her fifties. She got serious about writing the book when she and her husband Bill moved into IRT Links Seaside in 2008.

“There were two things that happened,” Gwen explains. “At my 50th birthday I made an impromptu

speech. During the speech I realised each table of guests represented a certain part in my life and that had planted the seed [for writing a book].”

Gwen was also inspired by a quote in an email her friend had sent. The quote was by the first female appointed to the US Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor: “We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual

threads from one to another that creates something.”

Gwen knew that her life's tapestry had been anything but “run of the mill”. She survived a desperately poor childhood, having a mother with a mental illness, being raped, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy, but through the heartache, she ultimately had triumphed.

When her cousin died shortly after Gwen moved into Links, she started to muse about his life being

lost the document at that point. I'm a bit of a fatalist. Maybe I needed to have some distance from reliving that event."

Gwen says the events in the book are part of a much greater tapestry. "My life kind of moves in phases," she says.

Her life's experiences mean today Gwen is a very independent and resilient woman. "I can put myself in someone else's shoes."

She says that her mother didn't teach her how to be a mother, nor to have tact or diplomacy. "But I might not have written the book if mum had taught me decorum," Gwen laughs.

The book is very personal and at times confronting.

family. "I'm hoping they can see the bigger picture," Gwen says. "The two people most impacted [by the book] are my brother and the child who was given up for adoption. Both of them have known all along that I have been writing my memoirs, although neither has read any of the drafts. They are supportive that this is my story and I have the right to tell it. We have discussed that my writing often makes readers feel that they are back in the time and place of telling. Since this may cause them to revisit old emotions, they may choose not to read the book, or to wait until others in the family have."

Gwen sought advice and expertise from the NSW Writers' Centre when crafting her memoir. She did a memoir-writing workshop and had a manuscript appraisal. "It helped to give me a focus," Gwen says. "There are two types of writers, plotters and 'pantsers', and I'm definitely a 'pantser' [writing by the seat of her pants]."

She had pitched her book to an agent and had a knockback. After a further edit, she went back out again, found another agent and publishers Hachette came on board. Gwen got the call to say she had a publisher while preparing to go on a writing course in Paris.

The book has now been published and Gwen had a successful launch on 12 July.

She hopes the book will start a conversation and has been invited to take part in a domestic violence forum in Nowra.

"I'm quite unsure how *I Belong to No One* will be received," Gwen says. "The whole journey has been so long and incremental, I passed the point of no return."

Gwen is already researching her next book – which is about her family's history.

I Belong to No One is available as an e-book and in all good book stores.

cut short and the stories that died with him. So she started writing in earnest. "There was a point when I said to myself 'just get it down,'" she says. "I wanted it to be a tribute to the people who supported me."

Gwen says writing the book wasn't a cathartic experience. "It wasn't upsetting to write, except for the chapter on the rape," Gwen said. "I did have difficulty writing about it and I

She never intended for her writing to be published, but things changed when it started shaping up to be something that could.

From writing the book Gwen says she has learnt a lot about herself. "Maybe I addressed some issues," she says.

The book is very personal and at times confronting. Gwen says she's had a mix of reactions from

IRT Links Seaside resident Gwen Wilson has written her memoir which is now in print.

