

Senior author dives into writing career with newly published fantasy novel

Aggie works to break from the 'student writer' handicap

By Katie Canales

Senior Kerri Allred made her debut in the publishing world with her Jan. 1 release of her mythology and fantasy packed fiction novel, *The Grimshah Forest*.

The Grimshah Forest is part of a relatively new genre called new adult, Allred said.

"A reviewer said it was kind of a mix between the Hunger Games and Percy Jackson," Kerri said. "It's basically just there's this war going on with the gods, it's got a lot of Greek mythology in it, and there's this war going on above and you don't know what it's about. It's told from the perspective of this girl who's really trying to find herself and basically the whole book, it all comes down to this girl and the whole fate of the world is on what she decides."

Kerri, who uses the pseudonym K.L. Beckman in her writing, is a violinist and pianist with the A&M orchestra and is pursuing music and anthropology degrees. Kerri said she became inspired by anthropology classes at A&M and incorporated much of what she learned in these classes into the book.

"I took a mythology and folklore class and that was just fascinating, just the things that people come up with to explain things," Kerri said. "And so I wanted to take that and run with it. It also has a lot of religious themes; it doesn't stick just to Christianity."

Kerri mother Alexandra Allred, Class of '91 and former Olympic bobsledder, said when her daughter was 10 years old and inducted into the Fort Worth Youth Orchestra as a violinist, she was diagnosed with synesthesia, a condition that caused Kerri to see colors when she heard music.

"This was undiagnosed

for years and so we think now she may have somehow heard classical music and saw colors which is why she wanted the violin," Alexandra said. "She was a competitive fiddler all before she was a teenager. So I kind of feel like she was meant for the arts all the way around. This is just her."

Kerri originally wrote the book when she was 16 and just recently returned to it this past summer. Allred said she began reaching out to publishing houses shortly after.

"What you usually do is you write a query letter which is basically, 'Hey this is what my book's about and I'm proposing this to you because...,'" Kerri said. "You usually try to aim at different publishing houses that are known for different genres."

With the help of authors within her family, Kerri pitched her fantasy themed book to the Next Chapter Publishing House, which agreed to publish it.

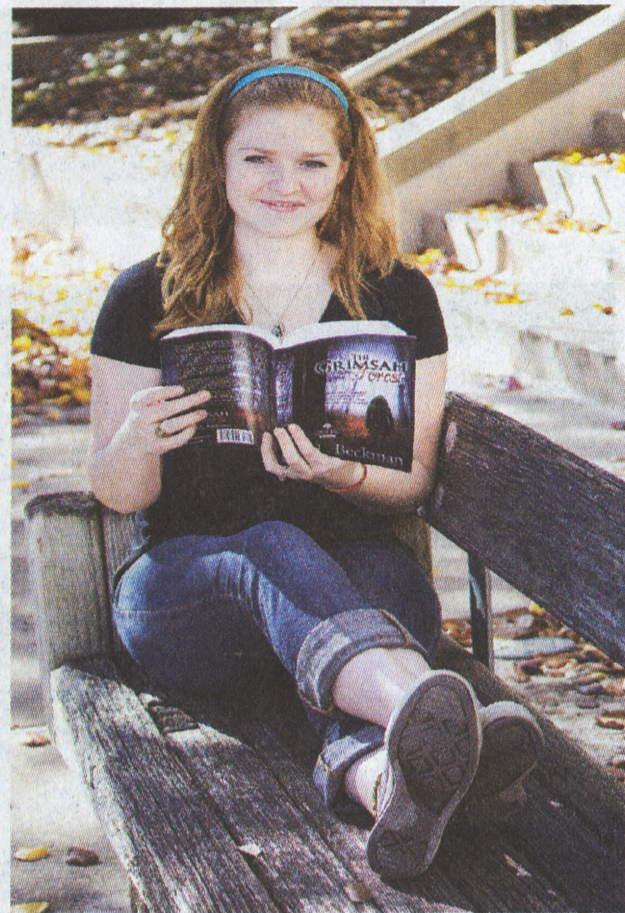
"I'm really lucky because my grandfather is an author, he does military history, and my mom is an author and she does sports and nutrition and nonfiction," Kerri said. "And I do fiction, fantasy. So I was really lucky that I had relations with other authors and so I got involved with them."

Kerri said it's fairly unusual for an author as young as she is to have a work published. Kerri said she's looking forward to beginning her book promotion without being classified as a student writer.

"I think it will change perspective of me because you hear 'student writer' and you think 'Oh, not quite there, not quite mature, not quite polished,' but I think once I get out I'll be taken more seriously," Kerri said.

Alexandra said she's told her daughter the writing industry is a difficult one and must be pursued with passion and vigor.

"Of course I give this advice to my kid and she gets



Allison Bradshaw — THE BATTALION

The first novel of author Kerri Allred, published under the pseudonym K.L. Beckman, is now for sale.

published right off the bat, but I wanted her to understand that this isn't American Idol and you get on stage and belt out a few songs and the world loves you," Alexandra Allred said. "I wanted her to understand that you're doing this because you love it and you may get rejected 17 times over but that's okay."

Kyle Beckman, Kerri's fiancé, was the first person to read Kerri's original story to read Kerri's original story of college. Beckman, whose name was the inspiration behind Kerri's author name, said he gave the same advice to Kerri.

"I know she had a bunch of people continually tell her 'no' and they didn't want to publish her work, but I just told her to keep going and keep trying and it'll work out eventually, which it did,"

Beckman said.

The Grimshah Forest is being sold online on Kobo.com, iTunes, Amazon and Barnes and Noble. Kerri and her PR team are working on scheduling book signings this spring on campus in the MSC and in Academic Plaza.

"I'm definitely going to rely on the Aggie community for sure," Kerri said. "Right now it's not in book stores, it's only online because I am new and it's a new book. So I really want to rely on my friends to write reviews because the more reviews that are written and the more books that are sold, stores are going to say, 'Hey this book is gaining momentum, I'm going to put it on my bookshelf.' And then that's when books explode."

SCIENCE

Texas A&M robotics symposium to feature an all-female speaker lineup

By Gracie Mock

For the first time at any major robotics conference, all 18 speakers of the Texas A&M Robotics Symposium will be female leaders in the field.

The symposium kicks off Wednesday with a keynote address by Ruzena Bajcsy, a professor from University of California, Berkeley. The 17 presenters after the keynote speaker will give talks the following day on their robotics research.

"Each speaker will give a brief, high-level talk focusing on her current research," said Nancy Amato, professor in the computer science department. "Topics will cover a broad spectrum of cutting-edge work and current research challenges by an amazing cadre of robotics and automation researchers from around the world."

Amato and Lynne Parker from the University of Tennessee were approached by the senior leadership of the IEEE Robotics and Automation Society and asked to take on leadership roles. As a result, Amato is the program chair and Parker is the general chair.

"We then put together the stellar team you can see on the website that includes top researchers from all over the world," Amato said.

Amato, who is program chair of the International Conference on Robotics and Automation's senior program committee, said the committee originally planned to meet in College Station to choose submitted research papers for a

May robotics conference. The fact that so many high-level robotics researchers were near Texas A&M was too good an opportunity to pass up, she said.

"Since the SPC members will be traveling here for the SPC meeting, I decided to take advantage of that and organize the Texas A&M Robotics Symposium so that our students, faculty and staff could have a chance to hear from these world recognized researchers whose expertise covers the spectrum of robotics and automation," Amato said.

The Texas A&M Robotics Symposium will start at 4:10 p.m. Wednesday in the Emerging Technologies Building. The event is free and open to the public.

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BATT

Mark Doré, Editor in Chief

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