

NEWS IN BRIEF

Application for licence

AMH Services of Caldicot has applied to the traffic commissioner to change a goods vehicle operators licence to add an operating centre to keep five goods vehicles at land at the east side of Pill Row on Caldicot Industrial Estate.

Homes plan

A PLANNING application to build two pairs of semi-detached three bedroom houses on the site of a former community hall on Herberts Road in Gardiffaith, Pontypool, has been approved by Torfaen council with conditions.

Boozy events

TORFAEN council's licensing team processed 86 alcohol and entertainment applications during 2010/11. This included applications for new premises and temporary event notices.

Bowling cash

TORFAEN councillor Julianna Biggs donated £100 to Cwmbran Park Bowling Club as part of the council's dispensations for small schemes.

Newsdesk 01633 777226

Life story worthy of her soap scripts

She met Lucille Ball and wrote episodes of iconic US soaps like *General Hospital* and *Days Of Our Lives*. Now Jann Seal is enjoying a slower pace of life in Monmouthshire.
KATH SKELLON reports

LIFE

JANN Seal puts her success as a script-writer down to piece of advice given to her by a friend and mentor 40 years ago. It was: "If we can't make our audience cry every day, then we haven't done our job," says 64 year-old New Yorker Mrs Seal.

"It's the emotional connection that keeps our viewer coming back for more," says Jann, whose credits include American soaps such as *Days of Our Lives* and *General Hospital* and *Guilding Light*.

That advice, from a head writer for NBC in Hollywood in the 70s, was to shape Jann's writing career which has spanned for four decades.

The grandmother of two is never short of subject material, having toured the world in a Land Rover for a year, interviewed celebrities such as super-model Cindy Crawford and tennis player Serena Williams, edited a magazine, and set up a modelling agency.

Jann and her Welsh-born husband Paul recently swapped the sunshine state of Florida for an idyllic coach house in the rolling hills near Abergavenny and are relishing the rural life.

She has attracted an on-line following with her accounts of adapting to life in Wales on her new blog 'Living Dibly'.

Jann Briggs was born in New York in 1947 and grew up in Jamestown, Chautauqua County, New York State, which was once known as the furniture capital of the world and the birthplace of Lucille Ball - born on the very street in which Jann grew up.

"I met her when she came to Jamestown for the premiere of *The Long Long Trailer* when I was eight years old."

"She came to our theatre group and watched our play and I



FAMILY: Jann Seal with daughter Cashley Acosta, then aged 15, ten years ago; and with husband Paul Seal at a charity event in Wellington, Florida

remember touching her mink coat." It was around this time that Jann's English teacher spotted her talent for writing.

"My teacher looked at me one day and said 'there's my writer'. It was my first inclination, but never my focus," she said.

The family moved to Washington DC, where Jann enrolled at the University of Maryland. After graduating she took her first job teaching English, social studies and science to nervous 12-year-olds.

She later taught in an inner city high school in Baltimore.

It was during this time she met and married her first husband Allan Goodman, a photographer. In 1970, when she was 23, the couple embarked on the trip of a lifetime - travelling the world in a green long-wheel-base Land Rover, visiting 36 countries and sleeping in a tent.

The couple are believed to be the first to drive around the world, although this has never been verified. While they were touring they made short reports for the television network NBC.

"We were able to visit countries that no longer exist in the way they do today. We had many unforgettable experiences in countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Norway," says Jann.

"We discovered the warmth of people from many cultures, who took us home with them and fed us."

She recalled a visit to Afghanistan where the couple stopped at a motel on the side of highway between Herat and Kandahar.

"We went into a dining room where there was a huge table filled

with platters. "Men in suits and turbans came in and sat at the table. We were invited to join them and found out they were celebrating the construction of the highway. It was American Thanksgiving but they did not know what it was so we explained it to them and they all raised their glasses and made a toast."

"When the war broke out in Afghanistan I wrote a piece about our time in Afghanistan and submitted it to a newspaper editor, explaining the kindness the Afghan people showed me. But he did not believe my time with them ever happened."

"To this day I am still horrified that the editor questioned a truth without even asking me about it. I think it typifies how closed-minded some people can be, even when they are in powerful positions."

As they travelled they set up camp in fields and alongside the road.

"While in France we stayed in a farmer's field. We watched the race at Le Mans and listened to the World Cup on the radio - it was a great time in my life. After the race we drove down the Mulsanne Straight at a whopping 60 miles an hour in our Land Rover!"

Jann also recalls an amusing day in Cluj, Romania.

"We needed to get from one end of the city to another but the roads were closed because of the Cluj Grand Prix. The only way we could get through town was to enter the race. So we did! At one point, the race cars went left down one road, and we continued straight - straight out of town! It was the only way we could get to Bucharest!"

The couple returned home to Washington but after three years were on the road again. A visit to a cousin in California inspired them to move to Los Angeles in 1974.

Jann found a job as a secretary at an advertising agency and began writing copy for the Rockwell handheld calculator and the B1 Bomber.

A year later she enrolled at the University of California and began studying for an MBA. However, after just six weeks she was offered a job working on *Days Of Our Lives*, TV's long-running popular daily soap.

She said: "I met Pat Falken-Smith, head writer of *Days of Our Lives*, and began working with her."

"I had never seen the soaps or had script-writing experience. She hired me on the spot without looking at my resumé."

"I quit my studies and began learning the process of writing a soap opera, which ultimately involved writing an hour's episode in only two days."

"The first time I heard my words being spoken on national television was a special moment."

While Jann's career flourished, her marriage to Allan came to an amicable end.

She met her second husband, the late Ed Hiller, with whom she had daughter Cashley, in 1985.

Ed passed away when Cashley was three and Jann decided to move to New York.

After ten years in the city and fed up with the snowstorms, Jann and Cashley relocated to be near her parents in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

It was here that she met future husband Paul on-line. He was living in Cardiff at the time.

Romance blossomed and the couple set up home in Florida ten years ago, marrying in 2001.

Jann wound up the modelling school she had been running and was asked by a friend to work on a magazine called *Wellington*. She took on several roles including advertising sales.

"After a few years it was too hot to go knocking on doors so I started writing features and became the edi-



CHILDHOOD MEMORIES: Jann aged seven in Jamestown, New York, where she met Lucille Ball, who was born there



Main picture: CATHERINE BOOKER CB_2806 Buy this photo at southwalesargus.co.uk/photosales or by calling 01633 810000



AMERICAN STYLE: Jann Seal at home near Abergavenny and, from top, with first husband Allan, right, meeting the head of Champion Sparkplugs in Brussels during their round-the-world trip in a Land Rover; and with American artist Norman Rockwell

Calling all pensioners and people with disabilities

Looking for a Carpet but cannot get out of your home cannot move furniture or take old carpet away

M.G.'s carpets will do all these things for you

Give us a call for our home selection service all fitting work guaranteed for 5 years

M.G.'s CARPETS & RUGS

www.needarug.com

Tel Newport 842842 or Cwmbran 870701

TV WRITER: Jann in Los Angeles in 1988



Newport Auctions

the fastest way to buy and sell
VEHICLE AUCTIONS EVERY MON, WED & FRI AT 6PM

Stocking quality part exchange vehicles from



WANT TO SELL YOUR CAR? CONTACT THE TEAM ON 01633 262626

PUBLIC & TRADE WELCOME! 100'S OF CARS - ALL MAKES & MODELS ANY AGE, ANY VALUE!

Full stock list at newportauctions.co.uk

All major credit cards accepted Find us at Usk Way, Newport, NP20 2BX - 01633 26 26 26