

# Westport author shares her 'Joyful Journey' after divorce

By **NANETTE MORGES**  
Hour Staff Reporter

Divorce is a life-altering event. For Westport essayist Jessica Bram, it wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Bram translated her experience with divorce, its aftermath and the renewal of her life into a collection of essays titled "Happily Ever After Divorce: Notes of a Joyful Journey" (April 2009, Health communications Inc.).

"As a personal essay writer and commentator, I always tend to write personal pieces of my life," said Bram, whose work has appeared in such publications as *The New York Times*, *Child Magazine*, *Women's Journal* and the *Sacramento Bee*.

After her divorce in 1997, she began writing essays about what she was experiencing. It began with what ended up being the first chapter in the book, "The Light Bulb Problem."

"After my husband moved out, light bulbs started to go out. The house got dark," she said. "Just dealing with the light bulbs became kind of a metaphor that I can cope."

By changing the light bulbs, Bram was able to bring light back to her house and her life by realizing she could do this.

"One by one, the different experiences I went through as I was going through the divorce seemed to have a theme to them," she said. "They came together as a story that makes sense."

Once Bram had compiled about a dozen essays, she wrote a book proposal.

"There was always a market for

anything encouraging about divorce," said Bram, who noted most of the books available were how-to books. "I didn't read any of those. They were meaningless; I didn't want advice. But hearing someone's story was different, especially if it was positive. That was the kind of thing I would like to read."

While Bram referred to her divorce as a painful, difficult and a frightening experience to go through, she said she found strength in herself.

"I found I could conquer things I didn't know I could conquer before," she said.

That is what she wanted to share with readers: the "positive aspect of building a new life after a divorce."

After her divorce, Bram moved from New York to Westport in 1998, began writing for local papers, and

formed the Westport Writers' Workshop, an organization that offers classes on several forms of writing, getting published, and finding an agent, as well as writers' retreats.

"I really started to feel good and realized I am happier than I had been before," she said. "I realized I had a message to give people. People

see  
BOOK A7

Contributed photo  
Jessica Bram



Lapsit Story Hour for 6-23 months old will be held on from 10-10:45 a.m. at Norwalk Public Library, 1 Belden Ave. For more information, call 899-2780, Ext. 131.

**Just Books' Kids Board** meets from 4-4:45 p.m. where children ages 5-18 can review new books at Just Books, 28 Arcadia Road, Old Greenwich. Drop ins welcome. Call 637-0707 for more information

South End Branch Library is hosting a **book making workshop** at 4 p.m. for ages 5-12. Show your love of reading by decorating a miniature book that will be displayed in the "Celebrate Library Week" bulletin board. South End Branch Library, 34 Woodland Ave., Stamford. 351-8280.

## Wednesday, April 15

**Toddler Tales** at Stepping Stones Museum for Children, Mathews Park, 303 West Ave., Norwalk; 10:15 a.m. (also 10:45 a.m. in Spanish). Call. 899-0606, Ext. 247.

**The Just Books Toddler/Pre-school Story Hour** at 10:30 a.m. at Just Books, 28 Arcadia Road, Old Greenwich. Led by Just Books' knowledgeable children's book staff, the story hour is an opportunity for young children and their parents and/or caregivers to learn about newly released books for toddlers and pre-schoolers in a cozy, comfortable setting, complete with beanbag chairs and a children's corner, for youngsters to enjoy the stories and books. The program is free and open to the public. Reservations are recommended, but drop-ins are welcome too; call 203-637-0707 or visit [www.justbooks.org](http://www.justbooks.org)

## Thursday, April 16

**StoryTime** at 10:30 a.m. at Rowayton Library, 33 Highland Ave., Rowayton. 838-5038.

**"Resource Center Reads!"** at 4 p.m. at Stepping Stones Museum for Children, Mathews Park, 303 West Ave., Norwalk; Children of all ages will enjoy hearing stories accompanied with the use of the many manipulatives offered in the museum's Resource Center. Call. 899-0606, Ext. 247.

**Just Books' Kids Board** meets from 4-4:45

see PENCIL A7

## Book examines life after divorce

from A6

going through divorce need encouragement. They need to hear 'Yes, you will be happy again. You will find love again, and yes, life will be great.'

"This is the book that reassures them it will be okay," she said. "I don't tell people what to do; I don't give advice. I just tell stories, and people can apply it to their lives."

Bram said that as word spread about the book she was working on, "people would grab my arm and say 'I need your book.' It really encouraged me to start going on it."

While the book contains Bram's personal tales, she said it wasn't written for her or as a cathartic process.

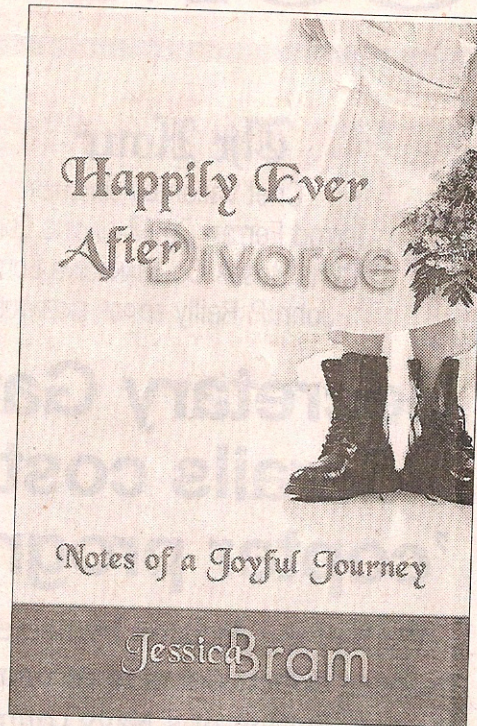
"I always write to be published. Writers write in order to be read," she said. "When writing for publication, you're always writing for a reader. This book was written for readers who might be helped and encouraged by it. I really open up my life in an honest way."

The book is published by Health Communications Inc., the company behind the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series.

"They've been wonderful," Bram said. "There was an editor there that really got it."

Once she signed the contract, Bram had five months to finish the manuscript.

"I had no shortage of material," she said. "There were always things I meant to write, but now I had a reason to."



Bram has been promoting her book locally as well as nationally. She'll be in Washington, D.C. this week to tape a segment for PBS. On May 5, she'll be at RJ Julia in Madison.

"It's really getting a great reception," she said. "It's been great."

*"Happily Ever After Divorce: Notes of A joyful Journey" by Jessica Bram is available at bookstores and online. For more information on Bram or her book, visit <http://jbram.com/index.html>.*