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Getting your first book published is something special. Just ask Diann Shaddox, whose romance novel, “A Faded Cottage,” came out March 17.

“I’m thrilled to death; I’ve been hugging it,” said Shaddox while clutching a copy of the book to her chest.

“A Faded Cottage” is also special to Shaddox because the protagonist, Quaid Witherspoon, suffers from a progressive neurological condition known as essential tremor or ET for short. Shaddox knows a lot about the disease because she has ET, too.

Often confused with Parkinson’s disease, ET causes rhythmic trembling of the hands, head, voice, legs or trunk. It affects an estimated 10 million people in this country.

“The tremors started when I was in my 20s,” said Shaddox, who lives in Aiken with her husband, Randy. “One day I tried to fill out a form, and my hand shook so bad I couldn’t write my name.”

Inspired by a grandmother who lost her right hand and learned to do everything with her left hand, Shaddox was determined to live as normal a life as possible.

“I’ve worked hard holding things with both hands,” said the Arkansas native. “I can play the piano, and I have been able to do cross-stitch.”

Shaddox, decided to start writing books about five years ago.

“I always had ideas in my head, but I wouldn’t do anything about them,” she said. “Then I got up one night, sat down and started writing on a piece of paper.”

Shaddox’s first effort was a science fiction book, “Legends of the Diaries,”. She also produced love stories, children’s stories and fantasy fiction.

She started writing “A Faded Cottage” in 2010.

“It was my birthday, and it was late,” she said. “I went to my office and sat down, and my hands were shaking. I was trying to type, and I was getting mad. That is how “A Faded Cottage” and Quaid Witherspoon came about.”

Witherspoon is a talented artist who has trouble painting after developing ET. Despondent, he moves from New York to the South Carolina coast, where his family had vacationed when he was younger. There he buys a cottage and reunites with a love interest from the past and learns how to deal with ET.

“But there is a twist at the end,” Shaddox said. “They (Witherspoon and his former girlfriend) have two weeks together, but will fate let them have more time?”

The author wants to raise awareness of ET with her book and plans to donate a portion of the proceeds to the International Essential Tremor Foundation. The timing of the novel’s launch couldn’t be better, according to Shaddox, because March is National Essential Tremor Awareness Month.

But even though it has a serious purpose, Shaddox believes “A Faded Cottage” will appeal to anyone

who enjoys romance books.

“Anyone who really gets into a love story and wants to believe in happily ever after should enjoy it,” she said. “How many people have thought about their sweetheart from when they were a teenager? There are a lot who sit back and think, ‘What if?’”

Shaddox, who now works on a computer, written about 20 books in all and wants “to keep writing forever.”

“A Faded Cottage,” published by Rebel Ink Press, is available online from Amazon.com as a trade paperback (\$12.99) or an ebook (\$5.99 for a Kindle version). Paperback and e-book editions can also be purchased from Barnes & Noble (www.barnesandnoble.com).

Booklovers Bookstore is also carrying “A Faded Cottage.”