expressyourself Get the life you want

got out

of a jam

How Pam



doing battle - with the bank

doing battle - with the bank. When the family finances went pear-shaped in the Ninetles, she appear shaped in the Ninetles, she pear shaped in the Ninetles, she price of the Ninetles of the

to start again."

Most celebrities would clam up Most celebrities would claim up about this But not Pam. The was a very humbling experience, "she says," and the but his most control to the but his many control to them. It knowled any self-simportance out of the but his manager's desk you become a lot less judgmental of others. It knowled any self-simportance out of the but his most like it had been to be the work like! I had here worked before. It was a strugget to get back to "The couple had bought the burn, close to their home near Circnosser, community theseiver and space for community theseiver and space for

community theatre and space for local groups to meet. First they were

'We were stronger and closer after

scheme and they more raddled with an expensive building they could do nothing with. It was touch and go whether they'd be able to hold on to their handsome Cotswolds home. their handsome Cotswolds nome, complete with beloved garden and smallholding. So Pam launched a gruelling schedule, performing as many as 80 shows a year.

many as 30 shows a year.

Pam's 34-year marriage to theatre
producer and concert agent Dudley
Russell survived the great barn
debacle, too. "We sort of stuck
together but I can see how it would
drive a great wedge between a
couple if one blames the other," she
says. "We made a stupendous

says. "We made a stupendous mistake but we came out the other side stronger and closer." He's a tolerant man, Dudley. Pam's new book, Surgically Enhanced, is he first new collection for nearly 10 years and has many their know-it-all ways, such as They Should Have Asked My Husband

HE smiles. "It doesn't bother him two hoots, he knows it's a script. But these husbands en't just him, they're an amalgam of he's not mine."
Having dealt with her decade of

Having dealt with her decade of debt, Pam is free to enjoy a resurgence in popularity and an ervisible home life surrounded by their rare-breed cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens and the bees she lovingly tends. To reaffirm her position as a national treasure. Pam was recently

Avres had little to laugh about when faced with firancial ruin. She tells SHARONWRIGHT how she battled to sounce back TOLERANT: Pam's spouse Dudley - her ne' poems bemoan husbands Once always on the TV, the

featured in a list of Britain's 20 Panniest Women observation of her comic verse and sketches have now found a natural home on radio. Radio 4's Ayres On The Air has been a recent hit, while reminded us what we've been missing. She's currently working on another Radio 4 production, a sitcom in which she'll play the manager of a garden centre. Not that she's sticking to her comfort zone. Last month site took to the stage at the Edinburgh Festival for the first time. It was a sell-out.

The youngest of six children, Pam grew up in Stanford-in-the-Vale, Oxfordshire, and started writing

poem at 12. At 15, she swapped secos lary modern for the Civil Servi 2 but got bored and joined the Wom 1's Royal Air Force. She Wenn its Royal Air Force. Sine perfs ned her poetry at a folk club and its invited on to local radio. In 1975, "ends persuaded her to apply for it popular ITV (alent show Oppel there) showeds and, "pulsating The have been plenty of plant its, including her I Wish I'd Look i After Mc Teeth making the top 1 of the nation's favourite

comi poems. Her last book made her t : fifth best-selling poet in Brits 1, just behind the likes of Ted Hugi s and Sylvia Plath. This helpr take her total book sales to Vet a 2's still dogged by criticism

when people think that because her

write a poem for Fern. But it's not the sort of thing I can do. The invitation didn't come back. It seemed like I had failed the test.

poems about celebrities."

Except John Prescott, of course.
In May, Pam wrote I Am Ready Mr advances than a thousand columns by sardonic lobby correspondents.
"I was in Scunthorpe, reading one of many articles about what he had or hadn't been doing to his secretary. It seemed so tawdry. I felt like takin a swipe. I felt a bit mean because I don't often take a swipe at people. But it struck a chord. I get this kind

aside those trousers/Hope they're quick release/For all that hanky quick releases for all that hancy panky Mada you clinically obese. There's one poem in the book that san't funny, though. The Akaroa Cannon is a heart/breaking description of revisting, alone, a holiday haunt sons William, 23, and James, 22, loved as boys. "I stupidly rushed around to the cannon like we had always done and there was no

reason to be there.

"That poem was about the empty nest feeling I don't want to cling on to them, they have gone, but it hurts when you go back to where you've had happy times and you aren't going to have those times again. It was like they were two little ghosts, gone." Pam describes her own childhood in the book, painting an idyllic "Well, my parents' marriage was ormy. It was the big worry of my

MOTION: Pam

stormy. It was the big worry of my upbtinging. It must have been hard with six children and money was tight. People got stressed." Pam is more interested in the here and now. Six months off her 60th birthday, her thoughts are running My poems have always been a sort of diary and I am writing about of chary and 1 am writing about things that are relevant to me now.' Nothing grabs an audience like empathising with their worries – then defusing them with humour. euthanssia called Count Me Out.
"It's a very, very pessimistic view
of the future. There's lots about
being afraid of walking down the
street, about MRSA, selling your
house to pay for a care home. These
are the things I can see people are
worried about. I am worried too."

HE title poem of her new HE title poem of her new collection, Surgically a nip and tuck to get a bottom "like two ferrets in a sack". It's what women her age are thinking about. "But I think life should be about what you are, not how you could not be a surgeon's land a cees to a surgeon's Building out with other celebrities helps. "I

'My poems have always been a sort of diary'

do my show, then I go home. So I never compare myself to anyone more beauteous!" more besuleous!"
Instead, sive restyled herself (and Dudley) the old fashioned way. "We had become obese. I do a poten called froe Fist and I tell people they can laught or org. I worde it when I tell to be the can laught or org. I worde it when I letter a continue to the continue to the continue to the continue to the present cancer scare but then I didn't. Yee la as strong as before. Now we have a personnal trainer called Gary and we're very lik. We've lott it did be between us.

comparisons between Pam and Str John Belgieman, who also faced sneers for – horrors – having poems that rhymed. Often dubbed "the people's poet", would Pam, already an MBE who's performed for the Queen, fancy being the Foet Laureate?

being the Poet Laureate?
"I never want to be told what to
write about. The Poet Laureate has
a finger wagged at him and has to
come up with the goods. Then it's
absolutely slaughtered in the press.
No thoules." No thanks."

She'll stick to writing what she fancies, then It might make us cry laughing, it might just make us cry. It might even be more satire.

Watch out, Mr Prescott.

• To order Surgically Enhanced (Hodder & Stoughton, £14.39) with free UK delivery, call 0871 521 1301 with your card details (calls cost 16p per min from BT landlines), or

lop per win from BT landlines), or send a cheque payable to Express Newspapers to The Express Bookshop, PO Box 209, Falmouth TR11 4WL or order via www.expressbookshop.com



Her verse has keptaudiences

amused for 31 yeas but Pam

from the poetry snobs. She doesn't from the poetry should safe doesn't mind if people don't take her work seriously. Says Fam: "I don't think of myself as a poet. I look at Sylvia Fiath and my stuff isn't the same. I'm aiming for a different poal. I am trying to make audiences laugh."

HAT really rankles is work is funny and accessible, it's easy. "I take a long, long time getting things right," she says. "People are always asking me to 'dash something off'. It's a bit insulting. I was going to go on a Fern Britton show and the producer said,