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The Back Story on *The Miracle Chase*

Authors: Joan Luise Hill, Katie Mahon, and Mary Beth Phillips

By Cathy Tyson

It all started with a friendly get together at Terzetto for three Moraga friends, Joan Luise Hill, Katie Mahon and Mary Beth “Meb” Phillips. At their second random coffee date the conversation turned toward extraordinary events in each of their lives. Meb’s daughter Liz was shaken by a neighbor’s nanny when she was only six months old and blinded. Katie had a strange encounter - thankfully cut short - in San Francisco with serial killer Ted Bundy, and Joan’s son had a very rare cardiac abnormality that required risky surgery.

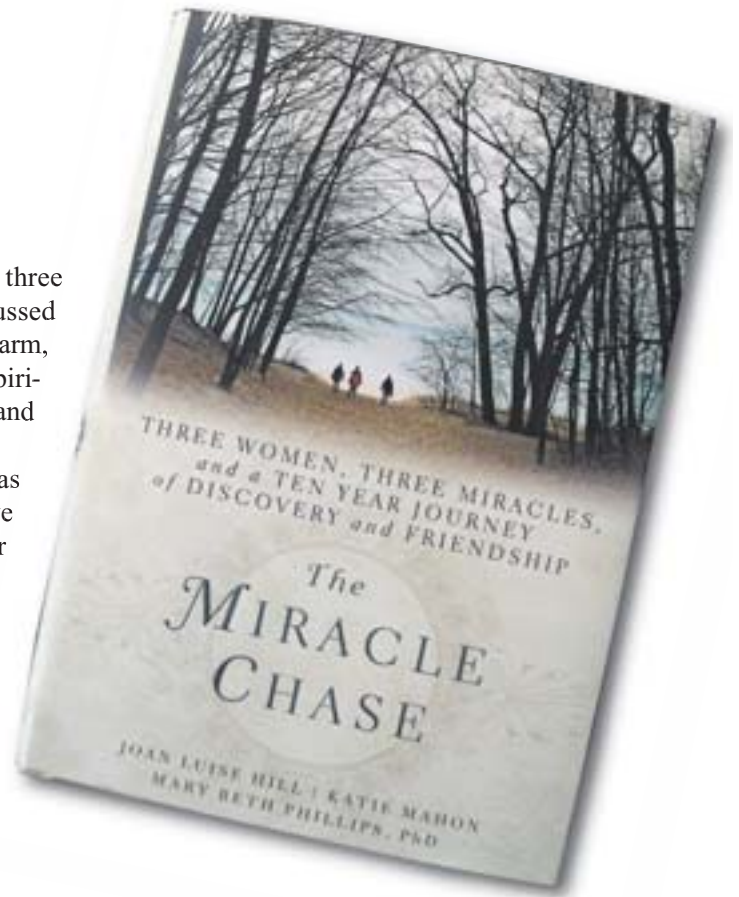
“Initially, we thought it would take six months – but it took ten years,” said Phillips, “the journey itself became important.” The trio was curious and determined to research miracles and in the process deepened their friendship – sharing insights and feelings along the way. All agreed from the get-go that they weren’t experts, but were serious about the project. They met weekly at Hill’s house, “Miracle Central,” and created a business plan, wrote a mission statement and divided up investigation tasks. Thus began a collaborative effort that produced, “The Miracle Chase.”

Early on, Hill somehow arranged to “borrow” a meeting

room at the Orinda Country Club so the three could have their own retreat as they discussed their vision for a book. The end result is a warm, engaging, easy to read chronicle of their spiritual quest across history, different cultures and wonderful coincidences in their lives.

Phillips jokes that the real miracle was that they found a publisher. They didn’t have an agent, instead reading “Publishing for Dummies” and following the instructions. After sending query letters to thirty publishers, they heard back from Sterling Ethos, an imprint of Sterling Publishing – a subsidiary of Barnes and Noble, just three weeks later that their manuscript was selected to be published. Now in its second printing, “The Miracle Chase” has sold approximately 10,000 copies.

For more information and pictures, visit www.themiraclechase.com.



Children’s Book Author Ginger Wadsworth

By Cathy Dausman

When the dog days of summer nip at our heels, there’s nothing quite like finding a shady spot and reading. And the chance to engage a young friend in the colorful world of books is even better than stretching out by yourself. Ginger

Wadsworth is a children’s book author with over 30 year’s experience. The Orinda resident writes for children, but not down to their level, and the subject matter and colorful illustrations can easily engage the child in each of us. “I guess I’ve never

grown up,” she says, explaining her focus on children’s books. But Wadsworth comes from a family of authors including her father (who also wrote for children) a grandfather, two brothers and a sister-in-law. Her work portfolio includes young reader biographies of Annie Oakley, Cesar Chavez, John Muir, and Julia Morgan. Her general non-fiction selections include the new *Camping with the President*, which has President Teddy Roosevelt teaming up with naturalist John Muir for a trip to Yosemite. The book is a great summer read, says Wadsworth, who just returned from Yosemite herself. She was delighted to find the park “overflowing with water and families.”

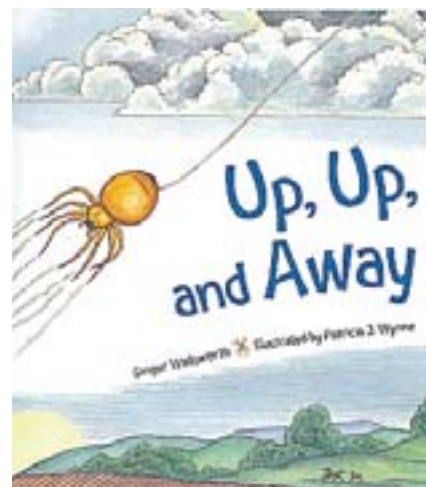
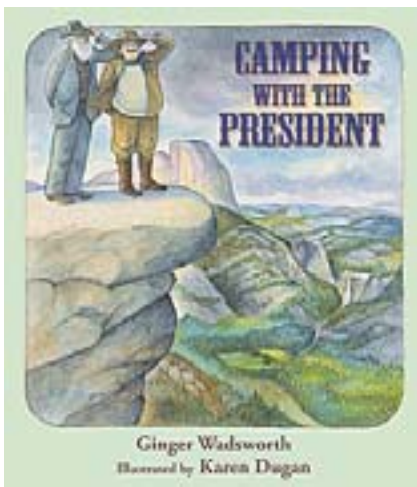
Wadsworth’s newest science and natural history selection is the Charlotte’s Web-themed *Up, Up and Away*. The illustrations are awesome --- colorful, intricate, and just right in their complexity. While

her narration may be simple, the author strives for accuracy even in the illustrations. You won’t find an east coast jay bird in a California setting if she can help it.

Wadsworth’s website is aimed at her young audience as well. The U-tube book trailers are voiced by young readers and look like a mini-movie. Wadsworth says her books reflect her own interest in the natural world: “As a California native, I often write about my state and western American history.” When Wadsworth takes to the hills to explore, she often brings along her doggy “writing buddies,” Willa and Scout.

A good book to read and a four-legged friend. Summer days don’t get much better than that.

Learn more about the author and her upcoming projects by visiting her website: www.gingerwadsworth.com.



Lilo Speaks: A Memoir, with Tom Adams

By Sophie Braccini

Lafayette resident Mike Heller called our attention to this book – it started us thinking about the importance of capturing oral histories before the stories are gone forever. *Lilo Speaks: A Memoir, with Tom Adams* is his mother’s story; one she was reluctant to tell until recently.

Once you open this short, 70-page book, you won’t be able to shut it. It’s not the style, which is simple and reads like the spoken word, it is the life and turmoil detailed in every paragraph that grabs the reader and makes one continue to turn the pages until the end. *Lilo Speaks: A Memoir* tells of the first 25 years in the life of Liselotte Basch, a Jewish girl born in Germany in 1921, who was thrown into the turmoil of the

Nazi regime, escaped to Indonesia only to be held by the Japanese in a series of World War II prison camps, and finally reached San Francisco in July of 1946.

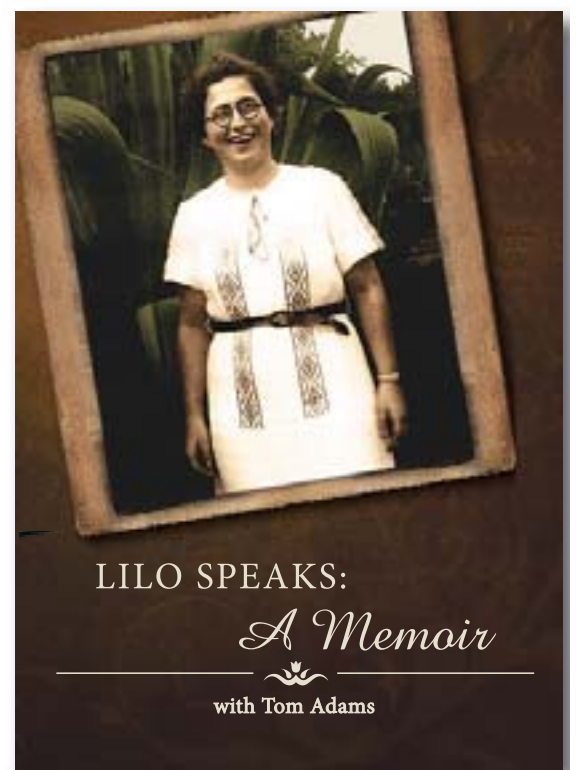
For years Lilo (Basch) Heller could not talk about her early life with her American family, “It’s too painful and no one cares anymore. Why dredge up the past? No!” she said. But she is the only survivor of her German family. The cousins who didn’t want to leave Germany or Holland were swept away by the Nazi extermination machine; her parents, who fled to Ecuador, died a long time ago— she had to tell the story of the Basch family and of lives lost.

Lilo Heller continues to fight for peace and social justice from her Mill

Valley home. The biographic that she recorded were transcribed by Lafayette author Tom Adams and published by Big Hat Press (also in Lafayette). It is available at local bookstores and online.



Tom Adams



Surprise! I’m Still Here! (Living with Incurable Cancer)

Author: Jane Rubey

By Cathy Dausman

Jane Rubey is not a pessimist, although some might say she has reason to be one. She’s more of a realist, but she’s written what she calls her “missal of hope,” and a “legacy for her grandchildren.” Rubey was diagnosed in 2003 with incurable cancer (myeloma) and has endured “horrific treatments,” but is slowly returning to what she calls her “new normal.” In the process she wrote the book she wishes someone had given to her.

Rubey, who just returned from a two-week trip along Europe’s Rhine and Mosel Rivers, says you don’t have to be sick to read her short (75 pages), upbeat book. “Cheer up,” advises the author. “Do the right thing:” sort photos, focus on favorite and special things and “clear out your closets.” Her advice, even by phone, skips from the sublime to the ridiculous. She talks about taking her own advice, including enjoying fresh air and meeting her goal of celebrating life. Still, Rubey insists, “I didn’t write this.” A friend, she says, made her publish her journaling. “A lot of people [who get a life-threatening diagnosis] give up,” says Rubey. The book’s message is you don’t have to.

Rubey is “scurrying” to take her 12 year old grandchild on a trip, a rite of passage she has also shared with her 17 and 15 year old grandchildren. She and the 12 year old will visit Mt. Rushmore in two weeks for what she says will be a “nice bonding experience.” Two more grandchildren, ages 3 and 5, live out of state, and for a moment Rubey turns pensive: “It is sad to me that my [younger] grandchildren never knew me as not sick.” But it’s clear she is taking her own advice, and in the process, letting those who suffer know they’re not alone. When a patient can only rest during [cancer] treatment, then “reading is a big thing.” And *SURPRISE!* is a little book that makes everyone appreciate hope and encouragement in their own life.

Rubey kept a website when she worked as a nutrition professional; however she has since dropped the site, explaining it now requires far too much effort. Her book is available at local stores, and online at Amazon; profits go to myeloma research.

