

Chappaqua Resident Co-Authors Mother-Daughter Memoir

by Michael Nocella Neighbors 14 hours ago Comment



Chappaqua resident Susan Hodara, right, Lori Toppel, Vicki Adesso and Joan Potter teamed up to write “Still Here Thinking of You: A Second Chance with Our Mothers.” Photo Credit: *Douglas Sarnoff*

CHAPPAQUA, N.Y. – In the early 2000s, writers Susan Hodara, Lori Toppel and Vicki Adesso met each other in a memoir writing class. Little did they know, years later, they would be co-authoring — and publishing — a book with the teacher of the class, Joan Potter.

The book, “Still Here Thinking of You: A Second Chance with Our Mothers,” comes out March 1, under Big Table Publishing, and depicts all four authors’ vivid memories of their relationships with their mothers.

Hodara, a Chappaqua resident and the only one of the four authors whose mother is still living, said the idea for the book was born in 2006. Following Potter’s class, Potter and Hodara decided that forming a writing group would be great way to keep in touch and recruited Adesso and Toppel.

The four started to meet every Thursday morning in Hodara’s dining room, bringing in pieces of work to read to each other and offer feedback. At one meeting, all four happened to bring in work about their mothers.

“That’s when we first said ‘Why not write a book about our mothers?’” said Hodara. “At that point we had no idea what it would entail.”

Hodara said that while the six-year process of putting all of their mother memoirs together in a cohesive manner was a challenge, the nature of the book, and those writing it, made it possible.

“The book has four different parts, each our own, and we were able to maintain a mutual respect for each other’s section, which was extraordinary,” she said. “There was no guarantee that would happen.”

The finished product is a complex examination of the true nature of mother-daughter relationships as told through four unique narratives. The authors’ goal is to inspire women to re-examine the relationships they have or had with their mothers — and those they have with their daughters—and view them in a different light.

"Hopefully, women who read this book will see it as a gateway to revisit treasured moments, pass by the anger and resentment, and discover their mothers' good intentions," said Toppel. "Readers may end up thinking about their relationships with their mothers in a very different way, and perhaps reevaluating them as we did."

Hodara can't wait get feedback from her mother.

"I just gave it to her for her 86th birthday, so I'm very excited for her to read it," she said.

She's also curious — and excited — to get feedback from the general public.

"I feel very confident in recommending this book, as I'm only one part of it. I simply love the other sections," she said. "If it was just my book, I'd be terrified and feel much more vulnerable. When three-fourths of the book isn't yours, it's a little easier to speak on its behalf."

"Still Here Thinking of You: A Second Chance with Our Mothers" can be purchased for \$15 as a paperback or \$7.99 as an e-book. It is available at BigTablePublishing.com, Amazon.com and will soon be available at the Chappaqua Public Library.

For more information on the book and its authors, along with a schedule for public readings, visit StillHereThinkingofYou.com.