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## Fairfield author talks about recent work

By DIANE VANCE | Mar 12, 2013

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Norman Zierold, author of "That Reminds Me," autographs one of his books for Peter Ecob Saturday at Revelations Café, after a book discussion. Freddy Fonseca, center, pushes in a chair after attending Zierold's interview while Terry Weiss, seated, talks with others across the table.

More than a dozen people attended a book discussion Saturday featuring Fairfield author Norman Zierold talking about his latest publication, "That Reminds Me."

An Iowa native, born and raised in the Amana Colonies, Zierold has written and published eight books, but this latest, subtitled, "A Conversational Memoir," comes 40 years after his seventh book, "Sex Goddesses of the Silent Screen."

Those first seven books, beginning with "The Child Stars," published in 1965, mostly deal with Zierold's first-hand encounters, insights and research about authors, stars of stage and movies, his life and work in New York and Hollywood.

Zierold moved to Fairfield more than a decade ago and works at Maharishi University of Management.

"For about 50 years, people have said I should write a memoir," he said. "I was always doing other things. I moved to Fairfield — though I'd been in and out of here before — and it took a couple years to begin writing."

Having committed words to paper, he wasn't sure how to get it all together in a readable fashion. He asked a co-worker and friend, Ken Chawkin, for help.

"Ken helped me get it all on my computer so I could manage it," said Zierold.

"I always felt like I'd do a memoir; I knew I had one more book inside. Everyone has one book in them — everyone has ups and downs, traumas and experiences, and if presented well, it makes an interesting read. Everyone has a book," he said.

So while Zierold happily drops names throughout his memoir, it is not about bragging or a "kiss-and-tell" exposé.

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Rather, Zierold keeps the little-boy wonder of the Iowa farm kid who spoke only German in his youngest years and relates everyday incidents, family dynamics and serendipitous meetings with the likes of Andy Warhol, Dylan Thomas, T.S. Elliott, E.E. Cummings, Anais Nin, Groucho Marx and many more.

Working for nearly a decade in New York City at Theatre Arts Magazine, Zierold's job included interviewing Noel Coward and others, attending theatre productions and rubbing elbows with intellectuals, playwrights and celebrities at Sardis.

Even before his magazine job, his service to country and Navy uniform got him in to see performances of Ethel Merman, Edith Piaf and Mae West—including a back-stage meeting with her after the show.

Anthony Quinn hired Zierold to help him organize writing his autobiography. Part one took place around Los Angeles, with Quinn's favorite retreat for working on his writing in California's Death Valley. Part two took Zierold on a six-week encampment in Libya in 1979 while Quinn was shooting a movie on location in the Sahara Desert.

Zierold's second book, "Little Charlie Ross," published in 1967, is a true crime story about the first kidnapping for ransom in America in July 1874. His book landed Zierold an interview on the "Today Show" in New York, with Barbara Walters.

While studying for a master's degree in English at the University of Iowa, Zierold was alone in a faculty lounge when the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas walked in.

"He was lecturing classes there for awhile, and he walks in and we have a visit, then I hear him again when he's teaching the class," said Zierold. "His reading of poetry is incomparable."

Zierold is an avid reader. Before the book discussion began Saturday, he was perusing the biography bookshelves at Revelations Café while his audience gathered.

"I grew up reading, and especially liked Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemmingway," he said. "Now I read biographies."

He refers to Voltaire and Henry James as other favorites.

"I would encourage anyone to write," he said. "Writing has a rhythm. Write without censoring yourself. Put it all in — you can take it out later. But if you leave it out and think you'll go back to put something in later, it can interrupt the flow and not fit. It's much easier to take something out than add it later."

"That Reminds Me," is a memoir, but it is not written in a chronological fashion. Zierold "puts it all in there," and lets it flow as a conversation with a friend — this thought leads to another topic; that incident reminds him of another story.

Reading the slim paperback gives a full glimpse of a life, as he wrote in Chapter Five: "These digestible portions of prose will add up in time to a fully drawn portrait, just you wait and see. It will be like nature's unfolding of a rose, petal by petal."

Zierold writes about cocktail parties and gala weekends spent at various friends homes, at the shore or in Mexico. He writes about eventually asking himself if getting high, waking with hangovers and being witty at parties is all there is?

He relocates from L.A. to nearby-but-a-different-world, Laguna Beach. He describes the town's peacefulness and incomparable beauty and power of the Pacific Ocean.

He sees a poster about Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and decides to attend a meeting, where he meets young people who have learned Transcendental Meditation. At age 45, Zierold discerns meditation seemed to work for them, so he signs up to learn TM in 1972. It is a quiet, gradual transformation for Zierold that leads to transcendence, bliss and months of euphoria, then becoming a TM teacher himself. He adds more travels to his passport and continues learning.

One of the gems among the jewels in this book is Zierold's story about his own father and their relationship as adults.

Zierold asks questions about life and offers some answers.



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