Local Poet Inspired by Kodiak Nightlife

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Erik Wander/KMXT

A long-time member of the Kodiak community recently published a book of poems inspired by fishermen and the other customers she's served over many years from behind the bar.

Having worked at Tony's Bar for 22 years and at B and B Bar for the past six years, Wendy Ann Waldheim has met and been inspired by many people. "Before the Dawn," a book of about 40 poems published this spring, is her tribute to those people.

She said many of the poems in the book were written by request after people heard her reciting poetry at the bar.

-- (Waldheim
1 20 sec. "My first poem was called ... write them poems, and so I did.")

Waldheim wrote the poems in "Before the Dawn" over a period of about six years, literally before the dawn. She said she composed most of them after coming home from work and thinking about all the people she'd talked to that night. One such poem, "Fisherman's Peril," is based on a story one fisherman told her about a friend's death at sea.

-- (Waldheim
2 30 sec. "Today we're with our ... a life that we won't forget.")

Waldheim recites her poetry from memory, reading them over and over again until they're committed to memory and she is able to recite them. She believes her poems have a broad appeal, not just for the people she writes them for. She said this is partly because of their narrative quality.

-- (Waldheim
3 12 sec. "You'll find that you'll be ... to the ending and everything.")

Waldheim said she had never considered publishing her poems, because she thought they were most effective when recited. Therefore, the book was nearly not published at all. She said she was contacted by her publisher after she had copyrighted

the poems and was convinced, after re-reading her own work, that it might just be good enough for publication.

-- (Waldheim 4 15 sec. "They called me up on ... wasn't as bad as I thought.")

Another of Waldheim's favorite poems to recite is called "The Warriors," which she says draws parallels between the physical, social and political battles faced by fishermen and those of actual warriors.

-- (Waldheim 5 34 sec. "From days of gloried ... realized how much was plenty.")

"Before the Dawn" is Waldheim's first published book. She said she plans to continue writing poetry, and that she's considering writing a science fiction story next. "Before the Dawn," published by Xlibris, is available at the Next Page, where it sells for 20 dollars.

I'm Erik Wander.

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