

Puppet Child is the topic of Hadassah discussion

Author Talia Carner to attend luncheon and book signing in Stony Brook

BY KATHLEEN O'SULLIVAN

The Sea-Port Chapter of Hadassah invites anyone interested in coming to be at the Three Village Inn in Stony Brook on Thursday October 24, at 11:30 am, for their 28th annual book and author luncheon. This year's author, first-time novelist Talia Carner, has written a passionate book about a woman driven to desperate measures to protect her child from the sexual abuse of her husband. It's a book about courts and how little protection the law gives. The book is called, *Puppet Child*.

Annie Blachley, a correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* and author of *Good Medicine*, describes the book on the cover. She notes, "In a wrenching race against time, the safety of one child becomes entangled in the theatrics of New York Family Court, bottled-up family

dynamics and the pressure of the political machine. This is a sensitively crafted, solidly researched novel that carries the cold ring of truth about the judicial system and impels the reader to hang on to find out who will win in the struggle over Ellie."

The book's publishers, Mecox Hudson, are so convinced that the book lends itself to provoking discussion that they have added a reading group guide. Having read *Puppet Child*, and it's hard to put down, I had to ask the author what experience in her own life had compelled her to tackle this subject. Her answer was most interesting.

"I have no experience of sexual abuse," she said. "I had an 'easy' divorce many years ago that got so recriminatory within the court system that it used up my parent's life savings and almost wrecked my two young children. Since then, my life with a new husband has gone very well, and, like my heroine in this book, Rachel Belmore, I became a successful publisher and business woman. Yet all my life I've been fascinated with the strength and stamina it takes for women with real issues to get through the court system."

The trigger to write this book came in 1995 in Beijing at the International Women's Conference where Carner was a panelist in seminars about women and economic development. "It was an emotional time as you encountered tales of worldwide discrimination against women everywhere," she said.

By chance, Carner attended a seminar about women fighting the court system to protect their children from sexual abuse and she was blown away. "I discovered that, in the U.S.A., hundreds of women are in prison today for 'kidnaping' their children to keep them safe; that 60 percent of the men who sue for custody of the

children they abuse win in the courts; that thousands of women give up the fight in despair." It was as if this was an issue and a book waiting for an author. She dropped the book she was working on and began her research.

"It's not as though I'm an advocate," she said. Carner, was born in Israel and was the publisher of *Savvy* magazine and the founder of Business Women Marketing Corporation before she became a writer. "I am an author who has had to wrestle with the problems of creating believable characters and legal situations for an outside reader. This is a fictional case. The court scenes could not be boring, the dialogue had to be crisp, and the case had to move." However, she does admit, that her research has brought her in touch with so many women who have stories to tell and who are running out of options within the legal system, that she "... got recruited by my own emotions. With *Puppet Child* published, I have the flashlight to illuminate a dungeon of shame. I'm hoping to start a national dialogue that may lead to change."

Carner has two more books waiting for publication. *The Matryoshka Doll* includes some of her own harrowing experiences in Russia but focuses on women's need for economic security before they can work politically.

"Economic freedom opens the doors to all other freedoms," she said. The other book is *China Doll*, set in China, which deals with issues of abortion and adoption. Her style of writing is the stuff of TV dramas. The book is just published, the future unknown.

The Sea-Port Hadassah is part of a worldwide organization of 300,000 Jewish women founded in 1912 which today is the largest women's, largest Jewish and largest Zionist organization in



Photo courtesy of Talia Carner

Author Talia Carner

the United States. From the inspiration of one woman, its founder Henrietta Szold, have come hospitals and medical centers, schools and colleges, youth villages, children's camps and programs to inspire the love of Judaism and Zionism. They have built two outstanding hospitals in Israel which treat 600,000 patients annually of both Arab and Israeli backgrounds.

Their brochure states their mission. In Hadassah, "women know that they can achieve great things because they belong to a force for positive change. They know that their individual ideas will be heard, because at Hadassah every member counts. Their projects will be taken seriously because at Hadassah every action counts. By becoming a life member they know that they can ensure that this legacy will continue."

Call Beverly Sokoloff at 751-8117 or Betty Kanowitz at 473-1690 if you would like to attend the book and author luncheon. The p

