

Local author celebrates publishing first book

■ Kari Grady Grossman is having a book launching at 6 p.m. Friday, March 23, at the Cowfish and again from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 24.

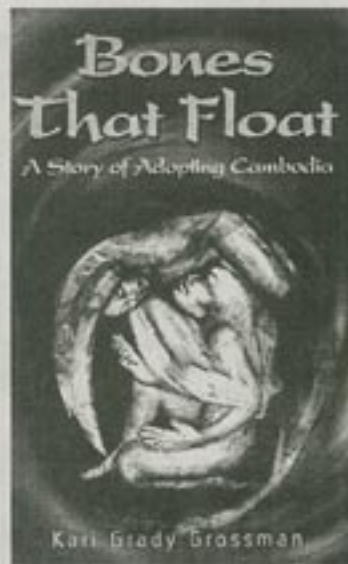
BY JAMES WYNN
Staff Writer

For Kari Grady Grossman and her husband, George, adopting an 8-month-old boy from Cambodia was only the beginning. It started in a crowded orphanage on the outskirts of Phnom Penh when the Grossman's met the little boy who would become their son in 2001.

Kari didn't just have a new son, she had a new country and a new culture to learn and understand.

Kari's new son was a product of a series of events that began when Cambodia gained independence from France, winds its way through the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and reached its apex in the darkest days of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. The 8-month-old Eric Ratanak Grady Grossman was an orphan in one of the most war-ravaged nations in the world, and Kari wanted to know why.

The end result was "Bones that Float; a Story of Adopting



Cambodia." It is Kari's first novel and a chronicle of her life since 2001, but it is also a chronicle of the history of the nation itself.

"When we adopted our son in 2001, we came home and realized that no one really knew anything about what happened in Cambodia with the war," Grady Grossman said.

Grady Grossman's book is really two stories within one. In order to help her capture the effect of the war on the Cambodian people, Grady Grossman enlisted the help of Amanda Prom.

Prom, who lives in Lander and opened the China Garden, was born in Cambodia and raised during some of the worst years of the Khmer Rouge's brutal campaigns.



Kari Grady Grossman

"Amanda told me some of her stories and I didn't think that people could really understand the history of the country without knowing what she went through," she said. "Basically, Amanda's story tells the history and mine tells the outcome."

Written over a period of four years, the book is, for Grady Grossman, a very personal account of what became a very life-changing event.

"The story is really about how adopting a single child led to adopting an entire village," she said.

The village that she is talking about is the one where she and her husband founded a school for Cambodian children shortly after her son's adoption.

The Grady Grossman School now educates nearly 500 stu-

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Kari Grady Grossman
Author

dents each year.

The book, set to be released on Friday is published under a company started by the Grady Grossman's exclusively created for "Bones that Float."

"I received a quick and hard lesson in dealing with the big publishing companies," she said. "It was pretty frustrating dealing with them."

Part of Grady Grossman's frustration in dealing with the major companies, was that she intended that for every book she sold, 25 percent of the proceeds would go to her school in Cambodia.

"I really didn't want to give anything of my book away to these big systems and corporations," she said. "So instead, I did a very Wyoming thing. I struck out on my own."

With her new publishing company, Wild Heaven Press, behind her, Grady Grossman began promoting her book.

"I have been doing it through a network of people who have a stake in this," she said. "I have gotten orders from people all over the world."

So far, Grady Grossman has sold 470 copies of her book.

"Its pretty remarkable when you take into account that we don't really have a book yet," she said.

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But to Grady Grossman, just because her new book is completed doesn't mean that journey she embarked on six years ago has come to an end.

"Just completing a book is something that no one can take away from you, but really, no one has read the book yet so there is still a lot of work to do," she said. "But there is the passion of the school behind the book, so that gives me a lot of get up and go."

"Bones That Float" is available at Main Street Books or can be found on-line at bonesthatfloat.com.

"I hope this book will have an effect on people," she said. "If people read this book and realize that there is something that they can do to help change their communities."