
THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis
Volume 23, Number 5

The Orinda Association, Publisher
Delivered to 9,000 Households and Businesses in Orinda

12 Issues Annually
May 2008

From the Mouth of a Child – A New Book

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It's the story of a grub. At 7 years of age, Grace Zaboski, grub aficionado, has the distinction of being the youngest HarperCollins author to ever collaborate on a picture book. The first-grader partnered with her father Dave and Orinda residents Ken and Maddy Dychtwald to create *Gideon's Dream: A Tale of New Beginnings*.

Enlisting the youngster as a story-teller and "senior editor" was a coup, according to renowned authors Deepak Chopra, and Jack Canfield.

Chopra calls the book "An inspiring journey of transformation for both children and adults." Canfield echoes his sentiments, claiming that *Gideon's Dream* "has the feel of a classic already."

As co-founders of the company Age Wave, the Dychtwalds have been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* and have appeared on *Good Morning America*. The pair deliver keynote speeches to more than 150,000 business leaders every year on themes of continued personal growth and metamorphosis. While Ken has authored 13 other titles, and Maddy one other book, this is their first children's book together.

According to Maddy, the Dychtwalds' goal was to craft a children's book that created "a timeless parable in the vein of Aesop."

The story is simple. While going through the motions of his monotonous life, Gideon, a grub, discovers flight when the leaf he is working on obeys the voice of the autumn wind, and breaks free of its tree. Gideon is scared, but his fear gives way to sheer joy. Having experienced the exhilaration of flying, Gideon cannot stop dreaming about soaring through the air again after he lands.

"Ken and I were inspired to write this book because we wanted to create a story our children would love that pertained to the idea that it's never too late to live your dreams," says Maddy, who points out that "most kids have this feeling that life sort of ends at 35 or 40 or maybe not even an age, but once they hit adulthood, that their choices become limited." She wanted to open the door to illustrate how a person can manifest his or her dreams, regardless of age.

The metamorphosis of Gideon can be seen as a metaphor for the changes humans encounter at all stages of life. From entering school through graduation, to career and marriage, we are constantly in transition from one phase of our life to another. According to Maddy, *Gideon's Dream* is an inspirational tale that "shows that growth and change are forever a part of life."

Illustrator Dave Zaboski, whose Disney animation credits include *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hercules*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, *Fantasia 2000*, and *Tarzan*, says, "The idea that we want to be responsible myth-makers for our kids is a really powerful thought."

While schools might have the responsibility of educating children through textbooks, Zaboski explains that "how we impart information to our kids is through stories. And so, having a 7-year-old around the house, it's important what stories she gets that help her become a master in her life of whatever it is that she chooses."

"Art reflects our planet, our culture," Zaboski writes in his artist's statement at davezaboski.com. "In art, we see a bit of ourselves reflected back at us."

Zaboski created many visuals, some of which Grace rejected along the way. He kept drawing until the child recognized the perfect character, smiled and said, "that's Gideon."

"Character creation is part science, part experience, and part having a 7-year-old girl looking over your shoulder," said Zaboski. "Gideon was created with a little bit of science, a little bit of experience, and a lot of input from Grace."

Clad in purple fairy wings, Grace adds, "I love Gideon because he makes me feel like all my dreams can come true, too."

