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Paddling Hudson, author finds way

In 'Drifting,' writer discovers river's story reflects own

By **MEG HAGERTY**
mhagerty@poststar.com

With each stroke of his paddle, Mike Freeman saw just how far off course America has charted its own path.

The New England author, whose newly released book "Drifting" details his two-week solo canoe trip down the Hudson River in 2009, reacquainted himself with an area of the country in which he grew up and reflected on how it has changed — especially during a time of economic turmoil.

Freeman launched his canoe at Henderson Lake and exited the Hudson in Northern Manhattan, commenting chapter by chapter on both the river and "delicate" subjects of war, race, energy and the fade of once-prosperous industrial towns.

"From Lake Luzerne to Yonkers, the whole Hudson is just a microcosm of industrial obsolescence. A lot of the industries that first rose on the Hudson also decayed on the Hudson. It's really a great metaphor for what happened in the whole country," Freeman said. "It's nothing but hollow factories."

The book parallels some of Freeman's own turbulence, including becoming a father for the first time at 41 years old and trying to find a job in Manhattan when the country was heading into a recession. Suddenly, Freeman was struggling to adjust to being a stay-at-home father while his wife became the main wage earner.

Freeman thought about canoeing the Hudson and writing about it after routinely jogging over the Rip Van Winkle Bridge.

"I thought that it looked like a very nice river to paddle, and the Hudson has 400 years of history on it — 2009 was the 400th anniversary sailing up it — so everything seemed to make sense," he said.

Despite his solemn reflections, Freeman said the canoe excursion was a "joy" from beginning to end as he met wonderful people who lived in the communities along the river.

Freeman said he wasn't looking to do anything other than to assess the present condition of the country.

"Once I got to Manhattan, I said, 'Oh God, what are we doing to do now?'" he said with a laugh. "I don't really have an answer for that, and I don't think too many people do. That's why the title is 'Drifting.'"

MUSIC LIVES ON

Folk singer Judy Collins shares insight into sounds of the '60s

By **DOUG GRUSE**
dgruse@poststar.com

The 1960s were a half-century ago, but the spirit of the decade remains alive in Judy Collins.

The celebrated folk singer, known for recordings of "Both Sides, Now" and "Send in the Clowns," talks about the pivotal time in American history and music in her recently released memoir, "Sweet Judy Blue Eyes."

"It's kind of a memorial to people who are gone and the whole decade of the '60s. I was deeply involved in the politics and the music business," Collins said.

Inspired by writing the book, Collins also will release a new album, "Bohemian," on Nov. 8. In addition to her own original compositions, the collection features songs by Joni Mitchell and Jimmy Webb.

To celebrate both releases, Collins will perform Sunday at the Equinox Resort in Manchester, Vt., in a Northshire Bookstore event. Before the concert, Collins will appear at the store to sign copies of her new children's book, "When You Wish Upon a Star," which follows up her *New York Times* bestseller "Over the Rainbow."

The picture book, with illustrations by artist Eric Puybaret and a CD featuring Collins' take on the tune, breathes new life into the classic song featured in Disney's "Pinocchio."

"We can give this to children to renew their interest in the song and have it be part of their lives just as it was part of our lives," Collins said.

Similarly, the singer and author, who also talked about aspects of her life in "Sanity and Grace" and "Singing Lessons," hopes "Sweet Judy Blue Eyes" can bring the music and mindset of the 1960s to younger generations.

In her most recent memoir, Collins discusses her lasting love affair with musician Stephen Stills, the

IF YOU GO

Judy Collins will read and sign copies of "When You Wish Upon a Star" from 4 to 5 p.m. Sunday at Northshire Bookstore, 4869 Main St. in Manchester Center, Vt.

Collins will perform at 8 p.m. at The Equinox Resort in Manchester, Vt. Tickets are \$85 and include a signed copy of "Sweet Judy Blue Eyes." Books will be available for pick-up before the show, starting at 7 p.m. at the resort. Tickets are available by phone at (802) 362-2200 and online at www.northshire.com.



alcoholism.

"How different it is now that I don't drink," she said. "I wrote about everything."

Collins finds parallels in the civil unrest in the 1960s and what is happening today with movements like Occupy Wall Street.

"I think people are finally remembering that they have a right to protest. I think we are in a very bad way. We have forgotten our primary purposes as a country," she said.

The message reflected in the music of the 1960s still rings true today, according to Collins.

"Woody Guthrie was talking about it 50 or 60 years ago, and here we are trying to talk about it today," she said.

Although Collins is comfortable with her life and the ups and downs she has experienced, she finds self-reflection to be a healthy exercise.

"Writing is always cathartic, and music always is, too. Being in the arts is the best way to live," she said.

music that shaped the period and her friendships with Joan Baez, Richard and Mimi Fariña, David Crosby and Leonard Cohen.

"I found a richer version of a lot of the early experiences," Collins said about her writing process, which relied on both her memory and the thorough records she has maintained through the years.

"I keep very detailed notebooks about what I am doing every day. I've been doing that since 1960," she said.

She also turned to other sources to fill in some details.

"It was a great adventure to do a book like this. I was open to research and delving into back stories. I was finding out more about them and myself," she said.

No subject was unapproachable, Collins said, including her



PROVIDED PHOTO

IF YOU GO

Mike Freeman, author of "Drifting," will be on the "Round table with Joe Donahue" radio show at 10:10 a.m. Nov. 14 on WAMC.



CONTACTS

For questions about a story or to report Arts | Life news, contact the following:
Doug Gruse, Features Editor,
742-3307

COMING TOMORROW

A bride and groom get in the spirit of the season by planning a Halloween-themed wedding.

COMING WEDNESDAY

A local baker offers up international sweets to benefit World Awareness Children's Museum.

COMING FRIDAY

Ghost stories help raise money for local people affected by Tropical Storm Irene.

NEXT WEEK

Students in Lake George get into the beat as part of the drumline.