

'Bellsong' has auspicious Young Adult class debut

HOW DOES A book get started? There may be as many ways as there are books. Ideas can come from dreams, from snapshots of conversation, from childhood memories, from significant events (either our own or someone else's) — and even, seemingly, from nowhere.

Bette Cannon's first novel, "A Bellsong for Sarah Raines" (Charles Scribner's Sons, hardbound, \$12.95), started out as a collection of personal experiences.

"I wanted to write down what I remembered about my girlhood," the West Bloomfield writer said, "but as I wrote, I wondered if I was seeing it the way it really was or the way my grown-up mind wanted to see it."

She wrote to a friend she had grown up with in Detroit. "I asked her, 'What are your memories? What did we do?' and she wrote back page after page of things I had either nearly or completely forgotten. My mind was just churning with all those thoughts and fiction seemed the only way to go with it."

"BELLSONG" MOVES FROM Detroit to the coal mining region of southeastern Kentucky, where Cannon knows well. "We spent summers there with my mother's family and I was always envious of my cousins. I always wanted to be from there. Their lifestyles were so far removed from anything I had known up north in the city."

Norgraphic: part display, part supply

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F. Weber artist paints were major sellers at Northwest. "Our artists lived there and we recommended them all the time," Kapp said. When the Philadelphia company went bankrupt, Kapp, with some trepidation, bought them out. "The quality of the paintings was excellent — we knew that," said Kapp, "so it had to be the marketing that was at fault (for the firm's failure)."

KAPP CHANGED THE name to Martin/F. Weber to include the name of their import and distribution subsidiary, Martin Instrument Co., and used his father's "build a territory, add a salesman" technique.

"So far, it's been successful," Kapp said, adding that the company also publishes "how-to" books, including those by tole and decorative artist Priscilla Hauser, and produces



book break
Mona Grigg

Sarah, the main character, comes out of a book Cannon says she wrote when she was in her early teens. "A sort of 'Gone With the Wind' revisited, as I recall."

"Bellsong" takes place during the Great Depression, and the precipitating event — the father's suicide — comes from an experience in Cannon's own life.

"I knew the story had to focus on that suicide and how it affects a family, and when I first wrote it, it was the mother's story. But several comments came back saying essentially the same thing — 'Strong characters, rich locales, but this book should be written as a Young Adult.' I put it away for an entire year before I finally had the energy to go back and rewrite it from Sarah's point of view."

The language is rich in Cannon's books, the characters memorable — from Sarah's father, sick with shame over a final layoff and haunted by the war deaths of his two brothers, to her mother, grieving, angry, and forced to return to the hills, to the very people who had forewarned her marriage would end in disaster.

Norgraphic is the artist's dream center — part display gallery, part art and graphic design supply store, part sophisticated, state-of-the-art reproduction center.

The new 1100 Cibachrome camera is capable of producing brilliant color photographs in almost any size of anything from flat art to written copy to three-dimensional objects like jewelry, small antiques, or even mother-watery, sizzling hamburgers — while you wait.

KAPP HIRED LIVONIA resident Jeanne Poulet, a flamboyant and

From Uncle Marsh, scarred both inside and out and afraid to love for long, to Keziah, the strong, feisty black woman who cares for them all, to "crazy" Aunt Wanda Raines, who can stop bleeding with spider webs and incantations "from God" and can "draw fire" from body burns.

THEN, OF COURSE, there's Sarah, displaced and now among queer people with odd ways, who loved her father too much to let the terrible, shameful way he died become the only memory of his life.

Here's Sarah, on her first morning in the unfamiliar house in Kentucky, a house with a swinging kitchen door, similar to the one at home in Detroit.

"She stood there in the dark remembering how Daddy would throw open the swinging door and blunder into Mama's steamy kitchen, taking up all the room. He'd kiss Mama and Sarah, too. He'd gather them up in his blue-shirted arms, hunch over them, and Sarah knew then that the sour breath and the sweet songs and the kissing were somehow connected. He never kissed them otherwise and certainly did not talk so much."

Sarah loved him even though he had the evil drink inside him. She loved him but she was afraid. She never knew what to believe, love or fear.

"Now, Sarah," he'd say, you don't know it, but my grandpa came from Virginia back in the 1700s. Owned a whole valley in them days. A land-ownin' educated man he was, too. Bet ye didn't know that, now did ye?"

"Nassir." But she did.

"And then, 'Of course, now there's your Mama. Now she has a real education. She can sing, opera, even. He'd giggle. 'Miss Monrie's Female Academy.'"

"His voice would keen off into laughter about fee-mates at school until Mama would march herself into the bathroom and lock the door against him and then he'd lean — no, it was more that he would sag — into the door, jiggle the knob and beg Mama through the closed door to come on out. Finally, Mama would edge herself out of the bathroom, feeling the knot of hair on her neck and smelling of 'Evening in Paris' and Sarah would be sent off to the store for a pint of Miller's Ice Cream."

THE CONCLUSION OF the novel, powerful and inevitable, was the hardest to write, Cannon said. "I wrote it and rewrote it and rewrote it and it just wouldn't come," she said. "Finally I gave up and went to work in the garden. There must have

been something about the sun shining down on me and the good earth working into my fingernails — because the ending came to me, complete — like a gift."

The Kirkus Review, a trade magazine whose pre-publication reviews are important to libraries and booksellers making purchasing decisions, gave "Bellsong" a star — one of five out of the 40 YA novels reviewed in the April 1 issue — and a more-than-favorable review. They called the

book an "auspicious debut for a first Young Adult novelist."

Cannon is the author of "All About Franklin," the history of Franklin Village, a former journalist and a short story writer.

Mona Grigg is an area free lance writer. She welcomes your comments and suggestions. Direct these to her in care of this newspaper, at 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.



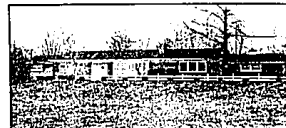
STEVE FECHT/Staff photographer

Art show winners

Winners in the recent Livonia Artists Club 29th annual art show were: Eleanor Nief of Livonia (left), second place with a watercolor, "Mary in a Yellow Hat"; Evelyn Henry of Redford, first place with an acrylic, "Reflections"; Al Weber of Livonia, third place with watercolor, "Vermont Mill"; and Ann Dase Loveland of Orchard Lake, the Grumbacher Award for best use of color with watercolor, "Deborah Relaxing."



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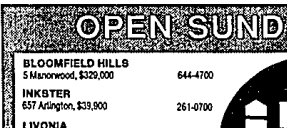
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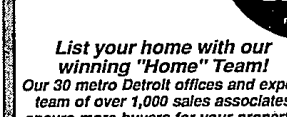
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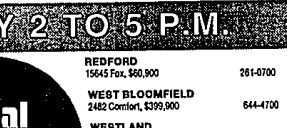
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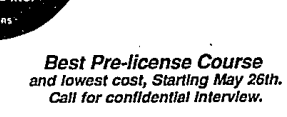
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