

## Local author articulates 'Eight O'Clock Blues'

**Eight O'Clock Blues: How one employee challenged a corporate giant and suffered the consequences**, by Candy Stevens, National Writers Press, 2001. \$14.95 paperback

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Candy Stevens

Lots of people have the *Eight O'Clock Blues*, but few do anything about it. Candy Stevens of Rochester did, she wrote a book.

"I wrote it because I was bitter — they destroyed my dream," said Stevens. Her hope is that managers will read the book and start treating employees like human beings.

Part fiction, part truth, *Eight O'Clock Blues* is about Sophia, 28, a single woman, living with her mother, a widow, in a suburb 40 miles northeast of Detroit. She's a secretary at one of the big automotive companies, and working toward a degree in English.

The story takes place in the 1970s. Sophia listens to Olivia Newton John on the radio and dreams about a nice guy and moving to Phoenix.

"Moving away would change things," she says. "She became the breadwinner of the family by default. Melissa and Natalie got married. Her father died several years ago, leaving his only legacy to her mother, part of his pension. So it fell on her responsibility to take care of her mother and Sandra (her sister)...who quit school when she was 16...she couldn't hold a job. Someone or something always caused her to quit."

But Sophia won't let herself leave her responsibilities. She's tethered not only to her family, but to a job she hates. Because she's good at what she does, her boss blocks an opportunity for a promotion. "Managers need to stop dehumanizing people and give workers an opportunity to grow," said Stevens. "They should create an atmosphere of growth. People are afraid to speak up because they don't want to lose their job." Sophia does speak up, and gets poor performance reviews because of it. When other people resign their work is assigned to her.

### Good managers

A good manager, Stevens said, is someone who is willing to take responsibility for their mistakes and gives you compliments. They don't make you uptight or nervous, or have the attitude "It's the boss do what I say." They don't expect you to work overtime and not get paid for it. A



CANDY STEVENS

good manager is understanding, down-to-earth, friend, humorous, allows for growth and develops talent.

Anyone ready to tell their boss to "take this job and shove it," will enjoy reading *Eight O'Clock Blues*. The book is a little depressing. I kept wanting to tell Sophia, "please, stop whining,

take a job in Phoenix, your mom and sister will be OK."

Sophia's transferred to the Training Department, away from the terrible Mr. Gyle, but Ernest, who seems on the surface to be an ideal boss, changes as his workload is increased.

"Sophia works for Ernest," Mr. Malstrom said. "She'll be moving to the front office when Frank gets a secretary."

"Is that a promotion?" Mr. Galant asked. "No. It's just a reorganization of the department," Mr. Malstrom interjected. "As Ernest's department grew, Sophia's workload increased, and Ernest assumed greater responsibility."

Things worsen, and Sophia is forced to make some difficult decisions.

*Eight O'Clock Blues* voices the frustration of workers doing two or more jobs because of corporate downsizing. There's definitely a them (management) against us (worker) debate going on.

In the rush to meet deadlines managers can overlook the needs of their employees, and *Eight O'Clock Blues* reminds them that workers are people too.

"Managers want to get as much work as possible out of a person, especially if they're industrious," said Stevens. "They want to keep trained employees in place to increase efficiency and profits destroying worker self-confidence so employees don't challenge management. I think they should capitalize on their employee's strengths, they'd get a lot more out of them. I was studying English and could have been in public relations instead of typing reports. It would have been a win-win situation. When employees are happy with what they're doing it's better all the way around."

Stevens is a graduate of Oakland University and worked for two of the big three automakers before earning her degree in English with a minor in journalism. Her book is available at local bookstores, and through Amazon.com.

To order by mail, send a check for \$14.95 plus \$3.20 for postage and handling to: Book One Publishing, P.O. Box 80781, Rochester, MI 48308-0781

### ART BEAT

Art Beat features various happenings in the suburban art world.

Send us news to Art Beat, Attn: Linda Chomin, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia MI 48150, fax them to (734) 591-7279, or e-mail (as a text file) to lchomin@oe.homecomm.net.

#### CANTORS IN CONCERT

Members of the Tri-State Region of the Cantors Assembly of America will come together on the bimah of Congregation B'nai Moshe, 6800 Drake Road

(between Maple and 14 Mile roads) 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 20, as featured performers in a benefit concert titled *The Songs we Sing: An Evening of Chazanut and Jewish Music*. Tickets \$10 in advance or at the door, special reserved seating for Concert Supporters, \$50 donation includes two tickets, Concert Sponsors, \$100 donation, also includes two tickets. (248) 788-0800.

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF DETROIT

Continues its 58th season 8 p.m. Saturday, March 23 with a performance by the Borromeo String Quartet with clarinetist Richard Stolzman at the Seligman Performing Arts Center (Detroit Country Day School, 13 Mile and Lahser roads in Beverly Hills). The program will include Beethoven's Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3, Quartet in 4 by Bartok and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, K 581. Tickets are \$18-\$67, students \$15, call (248) 737-9380.

#### ANN ARBOR SPRING ART FAIR

Over 100 juried artists and craftspeople from across the country will display traditional and contemporary paintings, sculptures, pottery, handmade, women clothing, jewelry and accessories 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, March 23 and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, March 24 during the 24th annual Ann Arbor Spring Art Fair, indoors on the Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5086 Ann Arbor-Saline Road. To get to the fair take I-94 to the Ann Arbor Road-Saline

Exit 175, head south and follow the signs to the fair grounds. Admission \$3, no charge for parking. Visit the Web site www.levyairs.com for details.

#### BIRMINGHAM MUSICALE

The Birmingham Musicale will present the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club at their annual benefit 8 p.m. Friday, April 6 at St. Regis Catholic Church, 3691 Lincoln at Lasher in Bloomfield Hills. All proceeds benefit the Birmingham Musicale's Scholarship and philan-

thropic programs. Tickets are \$25 (general), \$35 (patron), or \$50 (benefactor), call (248) 738-9827.

#### MEADOW BROOK ART GALLERY

Artisan Painters: American Portraits and Landscapes of the 18th and 19th Centuries, a show organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts, continues at the Meadow Brook Art Gallery through Wednesday, April 10 on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester. Visit www.oakland.edu/mbag for information.

### BOOK IT

Book It lists author signings, and other bookish events. Send, e-mail or fax announcements to Keely

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(734) 591-7279 or e-mail (text file only, or copy and paste into e-mail) kwygonik@oe.homecomm.net.

#### BOOKSTORES

Barnes and Noble: Local author Candy Stevens discusses her new novel, "Eight O'Clock Blues," 2 p.m. Saturday, March 23. The store is in Northville, 17111 Haggerty Road.

Borders Beverly Hills: Girlfriends Book Group, 7 p.m. Thursday, March 28, 31150 Southfield Road, (248) 644-1515.

Borders Birmingham: Meet the creators of Clear Magazine, 7 p.m. Thursday, March 21. French

conversation group 7 p.m. Thursday, March 28, 34300 Woodward Ave., Birmingham, (248) 203-0005.

Barnes & Noble: Harry Potter

Please see BOOK IT, B7

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