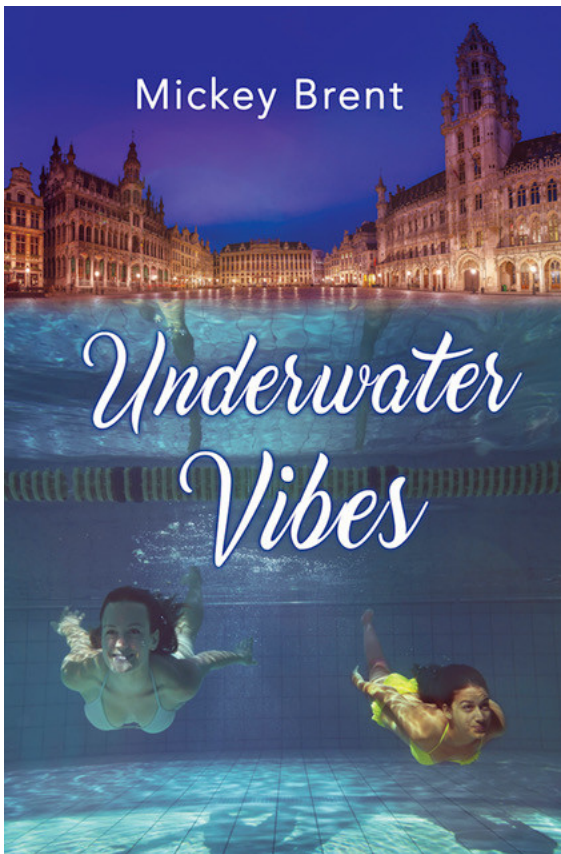


Encinitas author to discuss novel at Del Mar Library

By Michael J. Williams

Wednesday, March 14, 2018



"Underwater Vibes" cover (Courtesy BSB)

A pivotal, portentous moment in Ernest Hemingway’s novel “For Whom the Bell Tolls” occurs when the character Maria reveals she felt the earth move. Feeling the earth literally move changed Encinitas resident Mickey Brent’s life.

Brent resided in San Francisco in 1989 when the Loma Prieta earthquake struck. Horrified by the disaster, she moved to Brussels, where she lived for 17 years, and wrote a novel.

“I got scared. I left,” she said. “I was just like — I’m just going to move to Brussels. ... I was just going to stay for a year. ... I liked it so much I stayed there all those years.”

Now nearly two decades after her life-altering experience, Brent is reveling in the glow of seeing her first book, "Underwater Vibes," published. It was released last fall by Bold Strokes Books, a New York publishing house that specializes in literature oriented toward the LGBTQ community.

Brent said she initially wrote the story as a film script in French. Then, inspired by a writing class, she decided to transform it into a novel in English.

"I'm embarrassed to say I did 13 versions of that book," Brent said. "So every year at the beginning of the year, I rewrote the book. I know that is very strange — 13 years, 13 versions. ... I rewrote every sentence 13 times, which I don't think most writers do, but I guess I'm a bit of a perfectionist."

Mickey Brent, which is the author's pen name, is scheduled to give a presentation about her book and writing career as well as sign books in an appearance at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, March 24, at the Del Mar Library, 1309 Camino Del Mar.

Information on Brent and Bold Strokes Books is available at www.mickeybrent.com and Boldstrokes.com

Not only did Bold Strokes Books accept "Underwater Vibes," the firm plans to release her sequel to it — "Broad Awakening" — in October 2018 and she is under contract to write a third book.

All of these developments occurred after the publishing house had previously rejected "Underwater Vibes." After her sojourn in Brussels, Brent returned to Southern California and encountered the Bold Strokes Books' president at a conference in San Diego, she said.

When Brent said the company had rejected her novel, the president encouraged her to resubmit her work. "Then I got the letter saying, 'Yes, we've accepted your book,'" Brent said. "It was pretty exciting."

Set in Brussels, "Underwater Vibes" tells the story of a budding romance between Helene and Sylvie. Helene suffers from low self-esteem reinforced by her self-absorbed and verbally abusive husband, Marc.

Following advice from her doctor, Helene embarks on a campaign to lose weight and improve her health. The doctor recommends she take swimming lessons from a private instructor, who turns out to be the beautiful Greek woman Sylvie whom Helene had coincidentally already encountered at the Saturday market.

Throughout the work, Brent shows a penchant for detail and unique metaphors. At one point, for instance, Helene is described as having negative thoughts stick to her mind “like a blouse clinging to a clammy back.”

While the book’s theme fits into Bold Strokes Books’ niche market, Brent said she didn’t really intend to aim for a limited audience. In fact, she said, the story line began as an essay about an overweight girl who didn’t know how to swim.

Brent, however, hopes the book serves to show that people in LGBTQ relationships have the same emotions and experiences as anyone else.

For Brent, going through the catastrophic 1989 earthquake reshaped her life’s trajectory. She now hopes she can at least inspire others to be moved through the cathartic and redemptive message of her prose.

“I write, I think, because I kind of want to have an impact in the world,” Brent said. “I feel like our world, especially now, is a little bit controversial. ... Unfortunately, there’s a lot of unfairness and a lot of discrimination issues.

“I wish there were more tolerance toward diversity, towards people who are different. And that’s one of the reasons why I chose to write an LGBTQ novel. I want it to be easier for people who are different in this world to be accepted for who they are.”

Copyright © 2018, Del Mar Times