

LECTURES&LIT

Sweat Equity

Seeking a career change late in life, JoAnn Smith Ainsworth started writing bodice-rippers.

Wandering lost in a castle's cellar, a blind Saxon beauty overhears a murder plot. After a night of passion with a low-born lass, a dashing handsome Norman lord craves more. When writing her historical romances *Out of the Dark* and *Matilda's Song*, East Bay novelist **JoAnn Smith Ainsworth** didn't skimp on sensual details. In the latter book, the lord seizes the lass' hand "in both of his, creating a tormenting prison. While raising it to his waiting lips, he gently caressed its smooth skin with an insistent thumb," then "pressed the tip of his tongue to her skin as if to explore its elemental nature."



JoAnn Smith Ainsworth.

And that's *before* they hook up. It's a pretty heart-pounding passage from a UC Berkeley graduate who calls herself "a senior citizen author."

Laid off from her job as a Silicon Valley database administrator when the dot-com bubble burst, "I opted for Social Security, but not for retirement," Ainsworth said. Having dreamed since childhood of

writing fiction, she finally had the time to try it. "I chose to write romances because paperback romances were a \$1.2 billion industry at that time. ... Sales of these 'happily ever after' stories have risen during these stressful times to \$1.37 billion," said Ainsworth, who will be at **Borders** (39210 Fremont Hub, Suite 211, Fremont) on Saturday, June 12.

These days, she's working on two Western romances and a paranormal-suspense trilogy. In the first paranormal book, the US Navy hires five psychics to locate Nazi spies and explosives in World War II-era Philadelphia. The second "moves beyond the psychic into black wizardry and Pennsylvania Dutch hex curses," Ainsworth said.

The series' third book "moves the psychics to war-torn London, where the hero and heroine don't realize that their friend has been assigned by the Nazis to murder them if they find the Book of Cures, which will defeat Hitler's occult group powers."

Although Ainsworth is neither telepathic nor clairvoyant, "I am old enough to remember when scientists couldn't see anything smaller than an atom," she said. "Now, subatomic particles are studied. These particles were there all the time. We just didn't have the instruments to see and measure them.

"I follow this concept when I write my paranormal novels. Just because I've not experienced it doesn't mean it can't happen. Besides, I create a paranormal world that rises from the needs of the story. It's all out of my imagination. It's all about the story. Scientific proof I leave to others."

And while Ainsworth didn't grow up during the Middle Ages, skills she learned from rural grandparents who were born in the 19th century have found their way into her books. When, as a preteen, she helped her elders pump water, haul wood, clean chamberpots, beat rugs, and can vegetables, "I wasn't thinking: I could use this in a novel someday." Yet some sixty years later, that firsthand knowledge "made creating historical novels a logical choice." 2 p.m., free. 510-797-9799 or Borders.com

— Anneli Rufus

LECTURES

- Ants** A look at the ubiquitous insect, with park ranger staff. Sun., June 13, 10 a.m., Free. Sycamore Grove/Veterans Park, 1051 Wetmore Rd., Livermore, 925-960-2400, LARPD.DST.CA.US/Open_Space/Sycamore.html.
- David Sedaris** NPR humorist and best-selling author David Sedaris will take the stage at Berkeley Repertory Theatre to workshop stories from his upcoming book. Half price for people under 30. June 14-20, 8 p.m., \$35, 510-647-2949 -, berkeleyrep.org.
- EcoHouse Tour** Includes solar panels, natural and recycled building materials and other energy saving amenities. Sun., June 13, 10 a.m. & 1 p.m., \$10 EC members, \$15 general. Ecohouse, 1305 Hopkins St., Berkeley, 510-841-3757.
- Exploritas Program: The Berkeley Forum on the Middle East** Six-day Exploritas (Elderhostel) program features lectures by Berkeley professors and Middle East scholars. Call 877-426-8056 to register. Through June 12, \$756. International House, 2299 Piedmont Ave., Berkeley, 510-642-9490.
- Keeping It Real with Real Talk - Addressing Issues that Impact Women and Families** Experts on finance, health, education and violence will discuss these issues as they relate to young women. Hosted by the Alameda County Commission on the Status of Women. Advanced registration required. Sat., June 12, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Free. Alameda County Public Health Department, 1000 Broadway, 5th Floor, Oakland.
- The National Parks: America's Best Idea** Presented by Northern California National Park Rangers. Wed., June 9, 7 p.m., Free. Danville Library, 400 Front St., Danville, 925-837-4889.
- Obama's APak War: Pratap Chatterjee & Professor Kiren Chaudhry** A discussion of the relationship between oil and war in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, moderated by Dennis Bernstein. Thu., June 10, 7 p.m., \$10 presale, \$12 at the door. 145 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley, Berkeley.

LITERARY EVENTS

- Albany Library Evening Book Group** Rosalie Gonzales facilitates this group, which features novels based on "the American experience." Third Wednesday of every month, 7-8 p.m., free. Albany Library, 1249 Marin Ave., Albany, 510-526-3720, ACLibrary.org.
- Autobiography and Memoir Book Discussion Group** Third Wednesday of every month, 6:30 p.m., no cover. Hayward Public Library, 835 C St., Hayward, 510-293-8685, Library.hayward-ca.gov.
- Bernardo Abaga**, Discussing *The Accordionist's Son*. Wed., June 9, 5:30 p.m., free. Mrs. Dalloway's, 2904 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-704-8222, MrsDalloways.com.
- Bettina Rotenberg** discusses and signs "I Date to Stop the Wind" Bettina Rotenberg discusses and signs her new book, which concerns arts and poetry education in the inner city. Thu., June 10, 7 p.m., Free. Diesel, 5433 College Ave., Oakland, 510-653-9965, Diesel.booksense.com.
- Bill Morgan** discusses and signs "The Typewriter is Holy: The Complete, Uncensored History of the Beat Generation" Wed., June 16, 7 p.m., Free. Diesel, 5433 College Ave., Oakland, 510-653-9965, Diesel.booksense.com.
- California of the Past** Digital storytelling station allows people to record personal testimonials. Daily, free. Hayward Public Library, 835 C St., Hayward, 510-293-8685, Library.hayward-ca.gov.
- East Bay on the Brain** With Sam Hurwitz, MK Chavez, Charlie Haas, Kaya Oakes, and others. Sat., June 12, 7 p.m., \$3-5 donation. Layover Music Bar & Lounge, 1517 Franklin St., Oakland, 510-834-1517, OaklandLayover.com.
- Exhibit: Fighting Nazism with Words** Exhibit on literature published clandestinely during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Through Aug. 31, free. Doe Library, UC Berkeley campus, Berkeley, 510-643-6139.
- Exhibit: The Future of the Book** Exhibit traces the history of print over six centuries, from parchment, scrolls, and clay tablets to modern media. Through Aug. 6, free. UC Berkeley Moffitt Library, UCBCampus, Berkeley.