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By Andre Lamar

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Smyrna author's new book unveils 'A Dementia Caregiver's Journal'

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Before climbing up a narrow staircase leading to author Carol Child's in-home studio, you can't help but marvel at her gorgeous Victorian-themed home, with its large bay window in the dining room.

Child didn't give a tour of the house, she just simply led the way up to her secluded artist studio, tucked away upstairs on the other side of her Smyrna home. Unlike the fabulous décor on the first floor, her studio is modest and quaint. It doesn't have a Victorian theme, but, oddly enough, there are stencil paintings of the Man in the Moon that wrap around the top of the room. The studio is mostly made up of two windows, a computer, an antique-like sofa and loud classical music coursing through computer speakers.

Child's studio isn't the most fabulous room in her lovely home. And it certainly isn't the largest space there. Yet the room is dear to her, since it's where she penned her first published book, "[Begins the Night Music: A Dementia Caregiver's Journal \(Volume 1\)](#)."

"This is my refuge," said Child, 71, of her intimate studio. "I like to sit here and watch the tree change, which it does. It's a dogwood tree and the cardinals love it, and all the birds come and eat the berries in the fall, which is fascinating to watch."

Fears, tears and laughter

"[A Dementia Caregiver's Journal](#)" is based on Child's blog, salmonsaladandmozart.com. Child, whose pen name is Samantha Mozart, gives a non-fictional account of her decade-plus journey tending to her mom, referred to only as Emma, who lost a fight to dementia at age 97 in 2012. Child recounts this ordeal, which began in October 2001, where she trekked from sunny California to Delaware, clueless that her mother's tack-sharp mind was slowly softening.

"I just came here for a visit and found out she needed help, and there was no other family to do it," Child said. "All my stuff was still in storage in California. I left everything there. I didn't even have a winter coat."

"[A Dementia Caregiver's Journal](#)" offers readers a general idea of the frustration, tears and laughter Child and her mother experienced throughout this ordeal. One of the powerful moments in the story comes when Child realizes something is terribly wrong with her mother, who admits: "I forgot how to use the microwave."

Lending a hand

The reason Child penned a book on her mother's battle with dementia was to comfort others who are walking in her shoes, and those soon to follow, Child said.

During November and December 2012, Child gave presentations on her book at Atlantic Apothecary in Smyrna, M.O.T. Jean Birch Senior Center in Middletown and at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover.

"I know I'm not the only one in this situation. No matter how much help you may have, when you're in the middle of it, you are alone," Child explained. "You can only call your friends and complain so many times. And, besides, nobody wants to hear it. My blog and my book hopefully will provide a forum for caregivers to talk and to tell their stories."

The second volume of her book — titled "Volume II: To What Green Altar," which is also based on Child's blog — is slated to be published in late winter, she said. Child explained that "Volume II" will elaborate more on her and Emma's journey.

She also declared: "I think 'Volume II' is deeper."

IF YOU BUY

WHAT "[Begins the Night Music: A Dementia Caregiver's Journal \(Volume 1\)](#)"



PHOTO/ ANDRE LAMAR

During First Fridays at the Heart of Smyrna, author Carol Child (right) sold her latest book, "[Begins the Night Music: A Dementia Caregiver's Journal \(Volume 1\)](#)," to Robin Bruner, former president of the Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association (right).

COST \$ 8.99 (kindle); \$12.99 (paperback)

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