

BOOKS: SKOKIE WRITER'S NEW BOOK**Telling Family Tales to the Public**

ELLEN BLUM BARISH: VIEWS FROM THE HOME OFFICE WINDOW: ON MOTHERHOOD, FAMILY AND LIFE

Book available at
www.ellenblumbarish.com

Signings: 2 pm, Sunday, May 6, The Book Stall, 811 Elm St., Winnetka (847) 446-8880. 7:30 pm, Tuesday, June 5, Barnes & Noble, Old Orchard Shopping Center, Skokie (847) 676-2230

BY MYRNA PETLICKI | CONTRIBUTOR



Ellen Blum Barish has been writing columns that have delighted Toledo newspaper readers for years. She signs her new book Sunday in Winnetka.

Ellen Blum Barish didn't plan to share personal details of her life with parents in Toledo, Ohio and Ann Arbor, Michigan. It just sort of happened. Now, the Skokie-based writer is letting the rest of the country in on the details.

Her new book, *Views from the Home Office Window: On Motherhood, Family and Life* (Adams Street Publishing, 2007) is a compilation of selected

columns that have been published in *Toledo Area Parent News* and *Ann Arbor Family Press* from 1995 to 2006.

It offers an intimate, engaging look into Barish's life that should resonate with any parent.

Barish dares to admit that there are times she's sorry that she encourages her two daughters to speak their minds. She honestly reports that her family dinnertime doesn't resemble a scene from "The Waltons." "We have our own family dinner dynamic," Barish writes. "Bathroom humor and all." The author also shares moments when she and her daughters truly connect.

Working lunch

The evolution of Barish's revelations began in an Oak Park diner where she was having lunch with Rebecca Harris, a friend from college who had started Toledo Area Parent News with Collette Jacobs. They had lost their editor and Harris urged Barish to accept the position.

"She knew that I did both writing and editing," Barish recalled. "Over lunch she said, 'You'd be great for it. You've got two kids (then 4 and 8). You really care about parents and motherhood.' I remember telling her, 'Are you aware that

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On Motherhood, Family and Life



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you're in Toledo and I'm in Skokie?' She didn't think that was a problem."

For the next year, Barish assigned stories and edited the publication from home, traveling to Toledo once a month for production. Although the publication won a number of awards, Barish said, "It became clear to me that if you have a community paper, you really want to have a Toledo-based editor." "Harris agreed, but urged Barish to write a women's health column for the paper because she had written a number of health articles for other publications.

“It started out fine,” Barish said. “I was writing about PMS, nutrition, smoking, eating issues and body issues. They allowed me to go wherever I wanted to go. There was plenty out there about women’s health but I wasn’t seeing a lot of was about the experience of mothering and how it felt to mother. I found myself going there.”

Getting personal

Early on Barish tried to keep the columns “reportorial,” talking about studies and such and avoiding personal information. “As time went on, I was finding that I

was interested in going deeper,” she said.

Readers immediately responded to her columns, sending e-mail messages to Barish indicating she was saying things that were on their minds, too. “It’s so nice when people are moved by it or you give voice to something that people are not able to articulate,” she said.

Writing the columns also helped Barish to raise her kids. “Answers would come to me in the act of writing about it,” she said. “About the eighth or ninth year, I had a hunch that there was an overarching story about one

mother evolving alongside of her children.”

That’s why Barish decided to create the book.

Adams Street Publishing Co., Publisher Collette Jacobs said, “My readers feel like they know her because they read her every month and there’s always something that resonates within you, whether it’s her issues or issues you’re dealing with at the time.”

Views from the Home Office Window: On Motherhood, Family and Life lets the rest of the country know Barish and also enjoy the view from her office window.
