



The especial genius of women I believe to be electrical in movement, intuitive in function, spiritual in tendency.

Margaret Fuller, journalist (1810-1850)

Local artist Rya has created a set of note cards with eight designs that feature inspiring quotes by women artists and writers, ranging from Billie Holiday to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Several businesses have donated labor and materials so that sales can benefit Rape Crisis Network. They're \$10 at Rape Crisis Network's Saturday Market booth or by calling Rya at 344-7085.

BOOKS

Unique books by local writer

Review by Robert Wolfe

Marlina and McGee The Runaways

written by Bjo Ashwill, Bjo's Enterprises, Eugene, OR

McGee noticed that the new bear was missing one of her back paws. "Oh, you poor thing. Part of you is missing."

"I'm not a poor thing," said the bear indignantly. "I'm a bear named Marlina and I catch fish good. I just get from one place to another slower than most."

With that show of independence, the two little bears of *Marlina and McGee* begin an adventure that provides positive role models for young readers.

"Modern literature had deficiencies" in the way it portrays people with disabilities, claims local counselor, disabled-rights activist, and author Bjo (Be-joe) Ashwill.

To get the message across she has chosen to create her own literature. After writing stories, books, and an award winning play about disabilities, her latest project is a pair of children's books that teach disabled and non-disabled kids alike a healthy way to interact.

"The moral of my stories is independence versus dependence," says Ashwill. "Disabled people are trained to be dependent; they don't know what else to do." To foster independence, her books portray disabled children who learn to control when and what kind of help they receive from "temporarily able-bodied" people.

In *The Runaways*, young Bernice tells her over-helpful Aunt what she has learned from running away to the city for a day:

Bernice grinned. "Do you know what I noticed?" she asked.

"What?" asked Irene.

"People are always trying to do it all for me. They say they want to help but what they mean is they'll do it for me. So I just told them what help I needed and then they let me do the rest myself."

After futile attempts to interest publishers in her product, she turned to self-publishing. Now she is marketing the books locally and is making plans to attempt national markets.

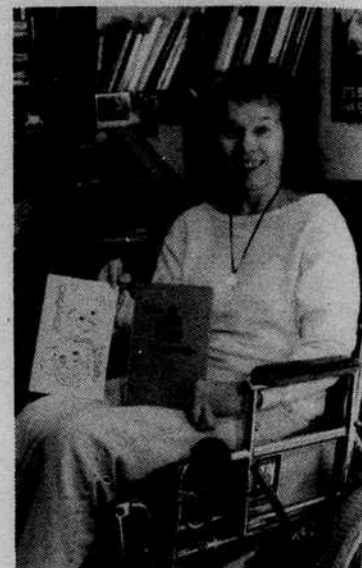
Her efforts to sell to local schools, libraries, pediatrician's offices, and other outlets can be frustrating. One experience came when she pitched *Marlina and McGee* to the Eugene Public Library.

"They didn't want my book because they already had one titled *Martin is our Friend*, and they thought that one book was enough. But that book is written from a non-disabled point of view," claims Ashwill.

A promotional flyer from the book promised to teach people "how to deal with those less fortunate than ourselves." It is exactly this type of "patronizing attitude" that gets Ashwill fired up.

"The words they use imply that disabled people are a sub-group" and promote dependency rather than teamwork, she says.

Ashwill brings a record of long activism in the area of disabled rights to her work. She is a former member of the State Board for Very Special Arts Festivals, which taught disabled children to participate in art activities, and was a member of the Eugene Commission for the Rights of the Disabled. She has worked since 1979 as



Author Bjo Ashwill.

a counselor at Lane Community College, where she started the "Disabled Student Services Unit." She worked as a disabled student counselor until she was "mainstreamed" into a job counseling all students.

"I was particularly pleased with that because they acknowledged my skills as a counselor, not just my skills with disabled people," says Ashwill.

Marlina and McGee is a softcover book written for young children through the third grade. *The Runaways* comes in both soft and hardcover, and is targeted at older children up to the eighth grade. The books are available through The Literary Lion bookstore, The Ugly Duckling, and the LCC Bookstore. They can also be ordered direct from Bjo's Enterprises, 837 Archie Street, Eugene, 97402. Either way, the softcover books cost \$5.95 and the hardcover version of *The Runaways* sells for \$12.95.

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