

## Barkin' and bickering around the Christmas tree

Society is beginning to pay more attention to serving populations with special needs. Movie theaters offer sensory friendly films, and students with special needs have increased access to music therapy, equine therapy and more. In many communities this holiday season, Sensitive Santa is coming to town to greet kids on the autism spectrum.

This is a welcome sea change, and author Sue Pethick, of Vancouver, Washington, taps into the phenomenon with her latest work of fiction, "The Dog Who Came for Christmas."

Kieran Richardson is a 9-year-old coping with his parents' recent divorce. Since moving to a new town with his mom and older siblings, he's having trouble controlling a raft of behaviors and facial tics that place him on the autism spectrum. His brother and sister don't have a lot of patience with him,

**"The Dog Who Came for Christmas"**  
By Sue Pethick  
Kensington  
316 pp  
\$9.95

and he's getting bullied by the kids at his new school for being different.

Meanwhile, Kieran's mom Renee, has her hands full, too. She's trying to support her family by building a clientele in her new job at the local hair salon, but a possible new romantic interest in her life — who happens to be the town's most eligible bachelor — is inconveniently the former high school sweetheart of Renee's most influential client.

It's Christmastime, furthermore, and Renee is hosting relatives for the holidays.

So she is already stressed out when the school counselor suggests that Kieran enroll

in a new program that assists special needs kids.

Renee vacillates. She had been hoping that Kieran was just going through a rough patch due to her divorce. She has to come to grips with the idea that her son's odd behaviors likely are manifestations of autism. She worries that with this program at school, Kieran might be needlessly medicated, and that he might be singled out and stigmatized. (She is unaware that her son is already being bullied.)

The complications multiply. A hometown clique of gossips isn't about to let Renee be the one to end up with the town's "Mr. Right." And Kieran befriends a large, extraordinary dog.

Pethick has developed an involving story line. She looks at the barriers and opportunities for people on the autism spectrum — and how family members come to terms with their loved one's condition. She writes about the demands of being a pink-collar worker. She captures what it's like to raise kids in a single-parent family, and looks at how difficult it is for romance to flourish when it has to take a backseat to the day-to-day crises that pop up.

The Richardson family members are fully fleshed-out characters who are interesting to follow. On the other hand, the townswomen who work in concert to discredit Renee seem to be over-zealous antagonists.

"The Dog Who Came for Christmas" is the third in a series of dog-centric romance novels that Pethick has written. This one is the strongest offering yet, thanks to the author's realistic focus on transformative issues that can either derail romance or become the foundation for love.

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [bkmonger@nwlink.com](mailto:bkmonger@nwlink.com).*

## word nerd

By RYAN HUME  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

### ADAIR [ə•DEƏR]

#### Proper noun

1. Gen. John Adair: Born into privilege and luxury on Aug. 8, 1808, in Louisville, Kentucky, to John and Catherine Adair, who were one of the most prominent families of the U.S. South. His father, also named Gen. John Adair was the eighth governor of Kentucky and represented the Bluegrass State in both the U.S. House and Senate after having served in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. The junior Adair attended Harvard and went on to study law.

In 1848, he accepted the position of collector of customs from President Zachary Taylor, a position it is rumored was first offered to Abraham Lincoln, who turned it down. The large Adair family headed west, crossing the isthmus at Panama to open the first customs office west of the Rockies in Astoria. He eventually bought a plot of land east of J.M. Shively's claim which became known as "Adair's Astoria."

2. Bethenia Owens-Adair: Née Bethenia Owens, Owens-Adair started her education late following a wagon-train migration from Missouri to Astoria with her family. Having relocated to Roseburg, Oregon, she briefly took the last name Hill after being married off to one of her father's farmhands when she was 14, but reclaimed her maiden name after divorcing in 1859. She finished her education while working as a domestic and milliner to support her son, George.

An early suffragist and social reformer, Ow-



Shawn Ann Hope portrays Dr. Bethenia Owens-Adair, the first woman doctor in the Pacific Northwest, during the 2013 Talking Tombstones held at Ocean View Cemetery by the Clatsop County Historical Society.

HUGH MCKENNA PHOTO

ens-Adair fought tooth and nail against discrimination to pursue training as a physician. In 1880 she received her M.D. from the University of Michigan Medical School. She became one of the first female physicians to practice in Oregon after returning to Portland. She married Col. John Adair, Jr., a WestPoint graduate and salmon canner and was briefly the daughter-in-law of Gen. John Adair. The couple relocated to Astoria where Owens-Adair continued to practice medicine. That marriage also ended in divorce in 1907. She died in Astoria in 1926.

3. Owens-Adair Apartments: A 46-unit Section 8 Senior and Disabled housing building at 1508 Exchange St. in downtown Astoria. Formerly the site of old St. Mary's Hospital, the subsidized housing units were developed in 1980 following the creation of the Clatsop County Housing Authority that same year.

#### Origin:


A Scottish variant of the Anglo-Saxon given name Eadgar, or Edgar, which is a combination of the Old English, ead, meaning "rich or prosperous," and gar, meaning "spear." In Scotland and Ireland, where it is most commonly traced, Adair is a surname. The Adair family crest prominently features a severed head.

"When Col. John Adair, the first collector of customs, arrived at Astoria he occupied the McClure house and tried to secure land from

the different owners of the town on which to build the customhouse. The owners refused to donate the land and fixed the price at a figure which Colonel Adair considered too high. The results of this disagreement was the establishing of the United States customhouse at Upper Astoria and the beginnings of the rivalry between the upper and lower towns, which lasted for many years, and led to the building up of two towns mutually jealous of each other yet having every interest in common."

—Alfred A. Cleveland, "Social and Economic History of Astoria," The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society, Vol. 4, No. 2, June 1903, p. 134

"Throughout her career [Bethenia] Owens-Adair was active in many social movements. She coordinated a visit and lecture of suffragist Susan B. Anthony to Roseburg in 1871. Additionally, believing that insanity and criminal action were hereditary, she argued for mandatory sterilization of the criminally insane. Her book on the subject, Human Sterilization: It's [sic] Social and Legislative Aspects (1922), was well-received and brought her national recognition. In 1925, the Oregon legislature adopted a sterilization statute that she and other advocates sponsored."

—"Bethenia Owens-Adair (1840-1926)," The Oregon History Project, [oregonhistoryproject.org](http://oregonhistoryproject.org), accessed on Nov. 30, 2017 

#### Crossword Answers

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