

“The story is based on something that happened to Jake as a child in the ’60s,” Lackaff said. “He wanted it done so it could be something for his grandkids.”

As a youngster, Jacob’s father forced him to spend the day working at a traveling circus. Since he was a small boy at the time, Jacob ended up working with an elephant to help raise the tents.

“Probably not something they’d let kids do now,” Lackaff said.

Jacob’s job was to crawl under the edge of a large tent, and place a pole into a rivet. From there, the elephant would raise the tent using a line attached to a pole.

“Jake came up with the storyline and we worked on putting it together,” Lackaff said.

Because of Jake

Though the job is the same, a few details were changed: The main character is a young girl and the setting was moved to the Great Plains during the Depression, details Lackaff felt added poignancy to the story.

“We made it about her realizing she wouldn’t have any fun at the circus without her family and her struggle to raise enough money to do that,” she said.

Because of differing schedules and the varied pathways of life, the story took about five years for the two to fully develop.

Eventually, Jacob gave the story to Lackaff to write, though with plenty of instructions. As the illustrator, however, she had free rein to create whatever pictures she wanted.

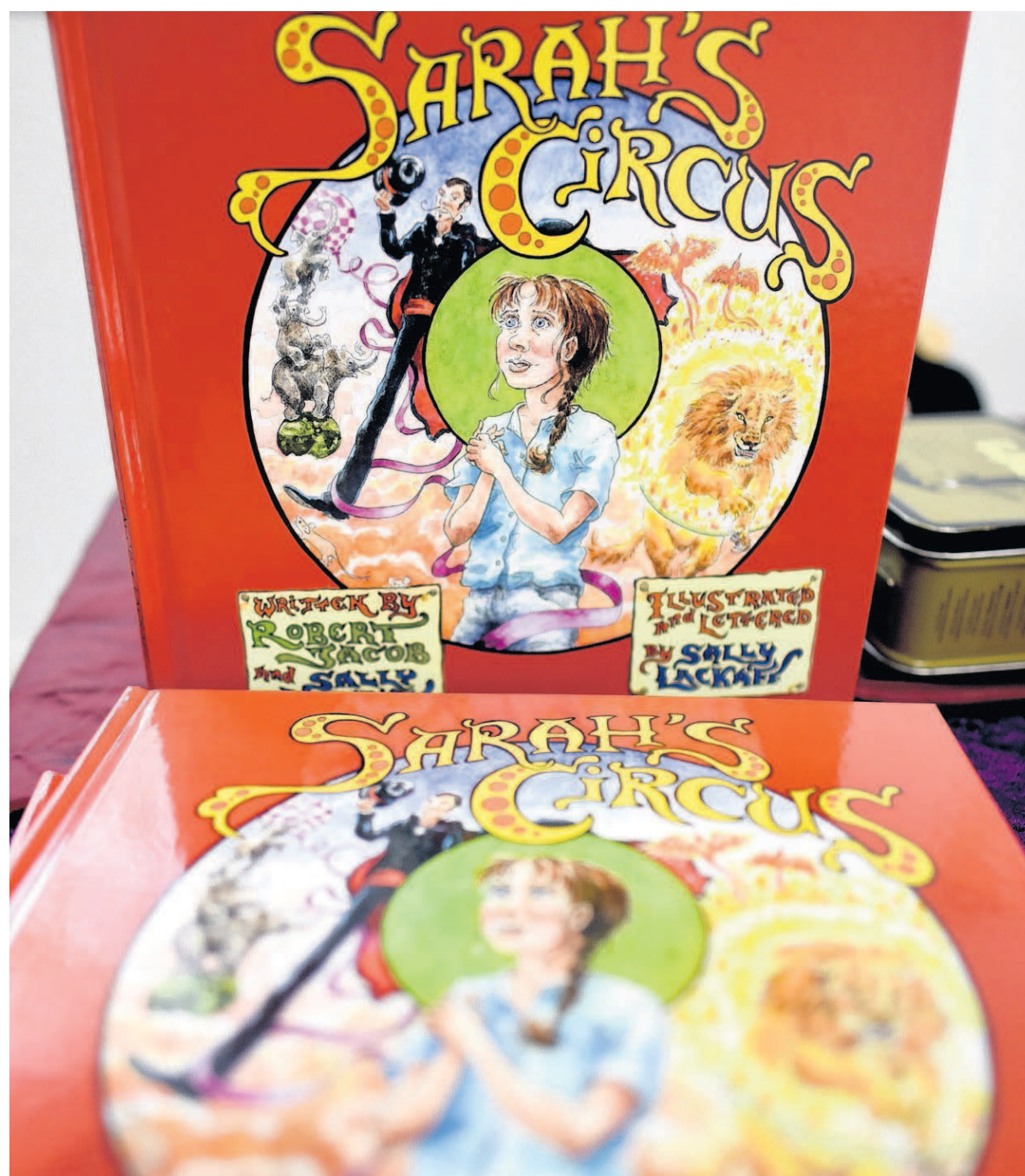
Lackaff is no stranger to creating images for publication: She’s illustrated books for Nehalem author Tricia Gates-Brown and written an illustrated wildlife column for the Upper Left Edge. Her work can be seen in many familiar commercial materials, such as logos for Fort George’s Festival of the Dark Arts and The Irish Table in Cannon Beach. She also created a sign in Cannon Beach commemorating the famous 1967 “Beach Bill” ushered into law by Gov. Tom McCall.

“The best part of this book for me was I was allowed to hand-letter it, something I love doing,” she said. “It became a book I would never have been able to produce on my own. Because of Jake, it turned out exactly the way I wanted it to.”

Years in the making

As the project gelled, Lackaff drew inspiration from some of her favorite children’s books, including Laura Ingalls-Wilder’s “Little House on the Prairie” series. Lackaff said “Sarah’s Circus” is a little more “wordy” than the typical children’s book, but described it as a story she’d have wanted to read as a child.

Released last spring, the hardcover book was warmly received by the community and the creators. Even though it was years in the making, Lackaff was glad that Jacob had the chance to see the story come to life.




COLIN MURPHEY PHOTOS

‘Sarah’s Circus’ is a children’s book by Sally Lackaff and Robert Jacob.

“My husband keeps telling me that the reason (Jacob) stayed alive was to see this finished,” she said. “I don’t know if that’s true but I really love the idea.”

“*Sarah’s Circus*” is available at Godfather Books, RiverSea Gallery, and Cannery Pier Hotel; Time Enough Books in Ilwaco; Jupiter Books in Cannon Beach.

Sally will be at Jupiter’s Books in Cannon Beach for a book signing Saturday, Dec. 22.

To see what projects Sally Lackaff is working on next, visit www.sallylackaff.com. 



Sally Lackaff signs a book for a fan.