

Cape Author Documents Parents' Journey In First Book

By SAM HOUGHTON

Even with nine kids, it was not uncommon for the Pola family to travel.

When the opportunity arose for Carlo and Peggy Pola, a Sandwich couple, it was to load the kids in the RV, make their way out of the driveway on Tupper Road, cross the Sagamore Bridge and hit the open highway.

Such was a newspaper headline in 1963: "They Took An 11,000-Mile Vacation with Eight Children in a Trailer."

That the Polas in their older years—Mr. Pola at 91 and Ms. Pola at 88—would make a trip to northern Italy should be no surprise. As age slowly took its grip on Mr. Pola, and blindness and memory loss were becoming more of a concern, time was running out for a visit to the region where he had spent much of his youth. But sitting back in a rocking chair was not the way the couple, nor their large, supportive family, saw their remaining years being spent.

So, along with two of their daughters, Jan and Velia Pola, they bought the tickets and took the ride.

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The results of the 13-day adventure—a catastrophic time spent in Charles DeGaulle Airport, tangling with eels in Comacchio, keeping above water in Venice and several other encounters—became the subject for first-time author, Velia Pola, in "A Bridge Between: Northern Italy Come Hell or High Water" published earlier this fall by Pesciolino Press.

Velia Pola, the eighth child of nine growing up on Tupper Road in Sandwich and now a Dennis resident, had spent time as a creative writer early in her life and had all but forgotten the art, until, in the midst of the trip with her parents, she felt suddenly inspired.

"In Venice," Ms. Pola said with a laugh, "I stuck my head out of a window and asked my sister: 'So, what are we going to call the book?'"

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'A Bridge Between'

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She had not set out to write it, but as soon as she was on the road to the airport, she began taking notes, which would eventually take form as the book.

The book is aimed at those simply looking for a memoir, or for a colorful travelogue of Italy, or, as a larger theme to the book, for the other baby boomers beginning to take care of their elderly parents.

In the book, Ms. Pola finds out quickly that she is in over her head in terms of helping her parents; the adventure becomes one that explores "beyond the picturesque backdrop of northern Italy, breaking ground on what has become a universal journey for millions of adult children—caring for the parents that raised them," said the author in a written statement. "It is a story of devotion, acceptance and the evolution of familial relationships."

The writing in the book can be snappy and humorous, especially in the beginning in a description of her parents coping with airport madness. As Ms. Pola writes of herself in the book: "what I lack in a natural tendency to nurture I make up in spunk," a comical description of herself and, naturally, an accurate description

of her writing.

As a child, Ms. Pola wrote often in a journal as well as poetry; she had gone to college to major in creative writing, but when that did not pan out, she let it be. It was not until decades later, after creating and writing a successful golf blog, did she find her voice again.

After the loss of a friend in the golf community, she wrote a eulogy and the relatives of the deceased wrote her back with praise and appreciation. Ms. Pola wrote, on her newest blog, abridgebetween.net, "I was indescribably touched by how the words themselves soothed my friend's family, how much her husband and children appreciated the depiction of her life."

With a new-found confidence in writing and after the experience with her parents, Ms. Pola felt she had a story to write, and, over the year since their return, she completed "A Bridge Between."

Recently, having put the physical copy in her father's hands, Ms. Pola said that she is excited about the release, and that her parents are overwhelmed with pride.

The book is available in local book stores as well as on abridgebetween.net.