

FICTION

- 1 All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr (Scribner)
- 2 Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn (Crown)
- 3 Big Little Lies by Liane Moriarty (Amy Einhorn/Putnam)

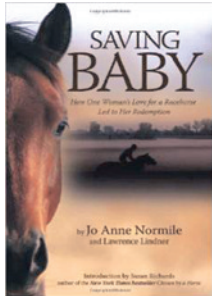
NONFICTION

- 1 Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand (Random House)
- 2 American Sniper by Chris Kyle with Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice (Morrow/HarperCollins)
- 3 Wild by Cheryl Strayed (Knopf)

Source: combined print and e-books for week ending Jan. 18

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2015

Exposé on horse racing a winning bet



SAVING BABY

Nonfiction

By Jo Anne Normile and Lawrence Lindner
St. Martin's Press,
\$25.99

Jo Anne Normile is a happily married 36-year-old freelance court reporter living in suburban Michigan with her husband, John, a Michigan Bell employee. But her childhood passion for horses is unfulfilled. That is, until the couple decides to change their life course by selling their house and moving, with two teenage daughters in tow, to a farmhouse, complete with pasture and barns for their pair of newly purchased horses, in Michigan's idyllic countryside.

Soon after, a thoroughbred foal, with whom Ms. Normile falls instantly in love, is born. He is grandson to Secretariat, superhero of the thoroughbred racing world. To honor a promise, Ms. Normile must train her "baby" for professional horse racing.

She is thus immersed into the "sport of kings," beginning in the early '90s and continuing for 25 years. But despite the sport's glamorous perception — with its mint juleps and flouncy hats — and Baby's great promise on the Detroit tracks, Ms. Normile learns, painfully, and at times too late, it's anything but.

"Saving Baby," Ms. Normile's memoir written with Lawrence Lindner, takes readers on an eye-opening ride that leads to a gruesome truth that the horse racing industry itself refers to as its "dirty little secret." The book also reveals many other secrets that

REVIEW FROM HERE

Lisette Davies Ward

Lisette Davies Ward is an adjunct professor in the English Department at Santa Barbara City College

the industry has shielded the public from for decades. Be prepared as they will shock you.

Being an *ingenue* in a male-dominated industry does not deter Ms. Normile from speaking out, single-handedly no less, as she

starts learning of the atrocities. When her singular efforts seem futile, with virtually the entire racing industry stacked against her, you'd think she would quit. But she digs her heels in and keeps fighting for justice, guided by an unwavering love for horses and belief in her cause, saving Baby and all

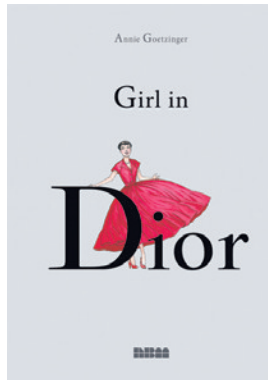
other thoroughbred racehorses from one industry-sanctioned demise or another.

Although these truths need exposing to raise awareness, and "Saving Baby" does this well, this true story is also about the indomitable human spirit: the unfathomable depths of love, hope and fortitude of one person in search of justice amid rampant apathy, corruption and death in a multi-billion dollar industry masked for decades as one of America's favorite national pastimes. This book is enlightening and moving, and well worth the read. Animal lovers in particular will be grateful for any steps toward the humane treatment of horses that it generates.

email: books@newspress.com

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Katie Haegeler



GIRL IN DIOR

Fiction

By Annie Goetzinger
NBM, \$27.99

'Girl in Dior' makes fashion statement

Christian Dior was one of the most influential fashion designers of the 20th century — dramatically so. Bursting onto the scene in the 1940s with his voluptuous "New Look" designs, he introduced Paris to his fantasy of full-skirted "flower women," and the whole world took notice.

"Girl in Dior," an unusual book by French comics artist Annie Goetzinger, is a brief biography of Mr. Dior's groundbreaking design work, as seen through the eyes of the fictional Clara Nohant, a fledgling fashion reporter whom Mr. Dior transforms into a muse and a model for his gorgeous dresses. It's an ingenious way to handle such a story: a fantasy about a fantasy, which only serves to dramatize how "enchanted" (to use Ms. Goetzinger's word) Mr. Dior's world really was.

NBM is a unique publisher to begin with. Founded in New York in 1976 by Terry Nantier, who grew up in Paris, the publisher has always focused on introducing European artists to English-speaking American readers. Ms. Goetzinger, for instance, is beloved in her home country — famous there for being one of a very small number of well-known female French comics artists — but she's largely unknown here. Her work for "Girl" was done in elegant portraits, seemingly inspired more by the world of fashion than any comics tradition — and to be sure, she also has a background in costume design.

"Girl in Dior" tells the tale of inexperienced, middle-class Clara, who goes from working as a shy but gutsy reporter who writes fashion articles for her magazine's "lady-readers," to a short-cropped Audrey Hepburn lookalike who knows how to navigate the world of the fashion elite. The book gives us access to the flurry of excitement backstage at a fashion show, circa 1947; there's no Zebra Katz pounding on the sound

*Please see **DIOR** on **A7***

FINDING HER SOUL

Santa Barbara author learns spiritual lessons in world travels

By **DAVE MASON**
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Svetlana Meritt traveled around the world to find herself.

The Santa Barbara resident and her late husband, Dwight Johnson, spent 1996 to 2006 in India, Europe and New Zealand and saw 77 sacred sites, from the King's Chamber in the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt to a cathedral in Chartres, France. But Ms. Meritt, a former journalist who once interviewed the Dalai Lama, said she found she could learn a lot from an ordinary person.

Maheswari, the Indian woman who cooked and cleaned for Ms. Meritt and Mr. Johnson in an apartment in Madras, India, was poor and losing her sight. "Here is this 20-year-old girl who had to provide for the family of six — her (unemployed) husband was kind of good for nothing, not helping at all — living in poor conditions, but every morning, she came in with this smile, just like sunshine came," Ms. Meritt said. "Here I am, I have everything that life could offer, but I am grumpy."

"Are you going to choose to look at the glass half empty

and half full?" Ms. Meritt said.

She talks about how her encounter with foreigners and other countries radically improved her perspective in "Meet Me in the Underworld: How 77 Sacred Sites, 770 Cappuccinos & 26,000 Miles Led Me to My Soul" (Hypatia, \$19.95). She also discusses ageless wisdom, the knowledge that preceded and inspired Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

She will sign the book 5:30 to 7 p.m. Feb. 12, its release date, at Granada Books, 1224 State St. She also plans to sell the book at other local stores and it's available at www.svetlana.meritt.com and www.amazon.com.

As recordings of meditative music softly played at her Santa Barbara home, Ms. Meritt explained what led to her journey.

The native of Belgrade, Yugoslavia (now Serbia), earned a bachelor's degree in world literature at the University of Belgrade. In 1989, she moved to Santa Barbara for her studies, and she earned a master's degree in French literature in 1991 at UCSB. She also worked as a freelance writer, covering the Oscars, interviewing celebrities and serving as the U.S.-based correspondent for Illustrated Politics, a Belgrade magazine, for whom she had previously worked while in Yugoslavia.

But Ms. Meritt said she was pursuing empty distractions: material success, beautiful clothes and a string of lovers. When she ended up with an alcoholic and schizophrenic man on a beach in Mexico, she realized she had hit rock bottom.

She wanted something more meaningful.

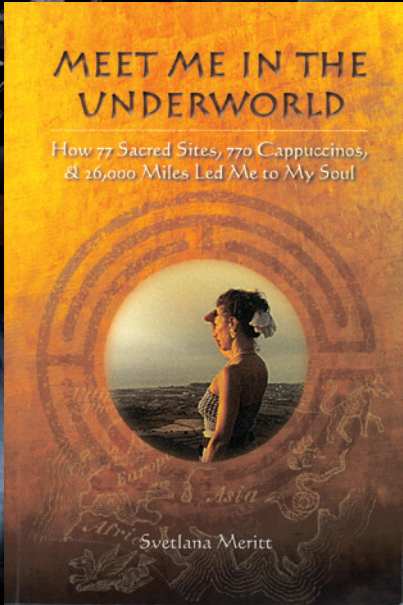
The answer came when she worked as a French teacher at Cate School in Carpinteria. There, in 1991, she met Mr. Johnson, head of the school's psychology and philosophy department, at a faculty dinner. They became friends and spent two years in platonic meetings to discuss spiritual teachings. Ms. Meritt stopped pursuing quick romances and turned to meditation and making herself a better person.

"The world of spiritual ideas that Dwight was opening up to me was infinitely more exciting than any of the worldly pleasures I had previously indulged in," Ms. Meritt wrote in her book.

When Mr. Johnson retired in the mid-1990s, he invited Ms. Meritt to join him to see the world. (They married in 2002 in Santa Barbara.) She visited sacred sites and reported extraordinary experiences.

In Epidaurus, Greece, she laid on top of a knee-high wall in the archaeological ruins of an ancient healing center. "I was looking for guidance," she told the News-

*Please see **SOUL** on **A7***



MICHAEL MORIATIS/NEWS-PRESS

Svetlana Meritt of Santa Barbara says she returned a more compassionate person after 10 years in India, Europe and New Zealand. She writes about her spiritual journey in "Meet Me in the Underworld: How 77 Sacred Sites, 770 Cappuccinos & 26,000 Miles Led Me to My Soul."

BOOK REPORT

By Dave Mason
Photos by Kenneth Song

What are YOU reading? Give us your book report (don't worry, you won't be graded on it). Email books@newspress.com or write to Book Report, c/o Santa Barbara News-Press, P.O. Box 1359, Santa Barbara 93102-1359. Please include your name and phone number.



Cindy Johnson, 50
Santa Barbara

"Key of Lights"
by Nora Roberts

I like the author of this story about three women challenged to free three demi-goddesses. A lot of the story goes back into Irish and Gaelic history, and the characters learn more about themselves.



Joshua Espinosa, 27
Santa Barbara

"A Dance with Dragons"
by George R.R. Martin

This is the fifth book in the "A Song of Ice and Fire" series, the book version of HBO's "Game of Thrones." I like the story about the Seven Kingdoms and the characters; you can relate with them. It's a great read.



Paolo Garcia, 23
Santa Barbara

"Winger"
by Andrew Smith

In this interesting novel, a boy at a Pacific Northwest boarding school is trying make a girl fall in love with him. You get a different perspective of how boys think.



Wil Jacobsen, 23
Santa Barbara

"No Country for Old Men"
by Cormac McCarthy

Somebody discovers a drug deal gone wrong and a whole bunch of money. He tries to keep the money while he's hunted by the people in the deal. I like how the book is told from several characters' perspectives.