

The written word and briefs

Interview with Author Kim Culbertson of Nevada City about her award-winning novel

Prospector: Please tell us a little about your novel, " Songs for a Teenage Nomad," published by Hip Pocket Press.

What's the plot and how did it come about?

Kim Culbertson: After living in twelve places in eight years with her drifting mother, fourteen year old Calle Smith finds herself in Andreas Bay, California, at the start of ninth grade.

Fearful of putting down roots anywhere, but armed with her song journal, she moves to her own soundtrack through a world that bounces her between the school drama crowd, a mysterious loner, and an unlikely boy who will become her first love.

But it's the troubling truth Calle uncovers about the father she thought abandoned her that forces Calle to face the toughest choice of her young life.

" Songs" is very much inspired by my teaching experience, the students I've worked with over the years teaching drama and English.

Pros: We understand it has won some awards. What are they?

KC: The book won the 2008 Ben Franklin Award for Best New Voice in Children's/ YA Fiction, the 2008 IPPY Silver Medal for YA Fiction, the 2008 Next Generation Indie Book Awards: YA Fiction, the 2007 London Book Festival: Teenage Fiction, and was a finalist for the 2007 USA Book News Best Book Awards for Teen Fiction.

Pros: Are you surprised that the book is so successful?

KC: I am delighted. It's a thrill to have the independent publishing world honor it with these awards.

Mostly, it's been really fun to have so many people respond so positively to it, especially students, teachers and librarians.

In fact, I just found out a high school in Ohio is having the whole school read it for summer reading and then flying me out in September to do a school- wide author visit. It's very exciting.

Pros: Tell us more about your writing career.

KC: I have published short stories but " Songs" is my first novel.

My screenplay adaptation of " Songs" was recently optioned by a producer in Los Angeles, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed for the project.

I am currently working on my second novel.

Pros: What about your personal life?

KC: I'm thirty- four and married to Peter Sagebiel, the Academic Dean at Forest Charter School.

We have a daughter, Anabella, who will be four at the end of June, and a puppy named Maya.

I have been a high school teacher for over ten years and I currently teach Creative Writing at Forest Charter School.

My parents and grandparents live here and I grew up in Nevada City.

My sister lives in the Bay Area. She does my Web site for me and I think she's done a terrific job.

I love traveling and the outdoors and feel really blessed to live in Nevada County.

My daughter goes to Tall Pines Nursery School and I'm on the board there.

I'm lucky to have such wonderful friends and family; they are my biggest support system.

Pros: Future plans?

KC: I'm working on my next novel and a new screenplay. Nevada County has such a lovely writing community and I cherish my writing group and the support I get from other writers in this county.