

Today's Mississippi Woman

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HATTIESBURG'S KATHY CHASE YOUNG

THE GIFT – YOU CAN JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

page 9

A BOUNTY OF BLUEBERRIES, page 7

MEET THE YELLOW HOUSE GIRLS, page 18



When I saw Kathy Chase Young coming to meet me at 'The Library' in our hometown, Hattiesburg, I was immediately reminded of Maya Angelou's famous poem, Phenomenal Woman.

Here is an excerpt from Angelou's poem to describe Kathy:

"I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me."

Phenomenal Kathy has recognized a dream many aspiring writers merely talk about all of their lives. She has published her first book.

I read *The Gift* before meeting Kathy finding it filled with remembrances of things past with large dollops of love as the icing on the cake. Kathy is a good storyteller in person and on the printed page.

As the youngest in her family, she is considered by her siblings, "everybody's baby". Sharing a patchwork piece of her history with eyes twinkling she said, "My mother and father went on a double first date but were not coupled with each other. Later, in the evening my father called out from the backseat, " Betty Hallmark, I am going to marry you. And, a short time later, they married. At the time, my mother was in nursing school and students were not allowed to be married. Their union was a love story."

Realizing how I perked up at the sound of the words love story, Kathy continued, "Unfortunately, my father

died at thirty four when I was only ten months old. As time passed, his sister fixed my mother up with a gentleman who would become my true second father. Even though, Tommy Chandler and mother were young enough to extend our family, he chose not to do so. Tommy loved mother and all of us so much. He let her know we would need his attention and wanted no other children to divert any of his love from us."

By this time, I realized this absolutely delightful, bright, articulate young woman has always know the goodness of being loved. We spoke of how fortunate she has been to have a life rich in love. "Yes, the happy, loving environment we grew up in had a trickle effect. All three children from this union have happy marriages."

Kathy and her supportive husband, Louis Young, were childhood sweethearts in Tupelo, Miss. "We courted before dating in an old fashioned way...lunch after church on Sunday afternoons and brief meetings. We both went out with a few other people but I knew Louis was the one for me and vice versa."

The Youngs have been married sixteen years in August, 2005. Their two children Chase and Janie enjoy reading and are justifiably proud of their mother's book. Kathy and Louis tell each other, "You know you can do anything."

Kathy's book is dedicated to her generous mother. *The Gift* tells of a splendid secret recipe for a popular chocolate cake that becomes a favorite gift. Kathy draws from her background in early childhood education and strong family values. "Before mother died, I did a scrap-



Kathy Chase Young has served as a child-care director, a preschool teacher and as an adjunct professor in Child and Family Studies. Believing that early childhood is a critical period of life, she has spent her career helping to create positive experiences for young children. Through her life, Kathy has developed an appreciation for children's literature and delights in sharing her favorites with children of all ages. She is proud to be a Mississippi native. Kathy and her husband, Louis, enjoy raising their two children (pictured top left) in Hattiesburg. From "The Gift" book jacket, Tishomingo Tree Press, 2005.

book for Mother's Day as my gift to her." At the time her mother told her, "You can do anything you want..."

What motivated Kathy to write this book? "I want people to remember times like this and be inspired to make more times."

If you want to laugh with your children, emulate a family who believes in each other with unconditional love and take advantage of a dedicated educator sharing poignant life lessons—*The Gift* is a must read and probably, a must purchase for your library. It is also a great excuse to have a big piece of chocolate cake with a festive pink napkin with someone you love!

The Gift may be found at Main Street Books, Hattiesburg, Miss., Lemuria Bookstore in Jackson, Miss., Jr. Square Books in Oxford, Miss. For other locations see www.tishomingopress.com



Illustrator Pamela Pollard Finch remembers spending hours reading picture books as a child. Many of the pictures remain in her memory today, evoking the same feeling of wonder and amazement. She hops that through her paintings, children will be drawn closer to the characters in the story, developing memories that will last their lifetime. Pamela and her husband live in Hattiesburg, Mississippi with their three daughters. From "The Gift" book jacket, Tishomingo Tree Press, 2005.

KATHY CHASE YOUNG'S GIFT

by Jo McDivitt

