

Carmen Corrales Konneker traces her father's life in *My Father's Quest*

A 7-YEAR-OLD CHILD climbs onto her father's lap and embraces his warmth. It's story time and on this particular day, her father has a surprise.

"Chameleon," says the child's father, "Today I am going to give you a gift."

The child looks at her father's empty hands and says, "Papa, I don't see a gift."

The father looks down with his blue eyes and says, "*Mi hija*, (my daughter), you cannot touch it; you cannot feel it; you cannot even see it. The gift I am giving you is an invisible box, and every time you sit on my lap, I want you to put my stories in this box."

Thirty years later, **Carmen Corrales Konneker** bound her father's stories in a book called *My Father's Quest: The True Story of an Orphan's Journey*.

Her father Daniel was the oldest of four children, who, at only 7 years old, becomes responsible for his two sisters and baby brother when they lose their parents in a tragic accident. The children are sent to an orphanage and one night, Daniel escapes to seek a better life for them. A baker takes him in and treats him like his own, and Daniel sneaks pieces of bread to his siblings as often as he can, but they are soon separated and Daniel's journey across Mexico and into the United States begins.

"My father was incredible and his story needs to be told," said Carmen. "This book, as simple as it is, is filled with a promise to give people hope that there is always a tomorrow, no matter what adversities may come."

Because of a promise to his father to reunite his siblings, Daniel perseveres on his journey in times of hunger and exhaustion. He savors the fruit of cacti and travels, mostly on foot, from one city to another to look for work. Every job harbors new relationships, and eventually, he meets Lydia, Carmen's mom.

"My mother was so intelligent," said Carmen. "She was able to manage my father's businesses, his grocery stores, bakeries, and ambulatory movie theaters. She was a wonderful wife and mother."

Carmen was born in a town called Bavispe in Sonora, Mexico. She is the youngest of three, including her brother, Daniel II, and sister, Teresa. Carmen attended various schools in Mexico, California, Arizona, and

Texas, including nursing school, and she became a medical assistant. After that, she pursued business management and worked at a French restaurant. Carmen dipped her hands into modeling school, too, "but the best school I have ever attended," she said, "is called The School of Life. I continue to learn whatever I can to be of help to all people. I try to live life in the simplest way."

Carmen and her husband have been married for 25 years and lived in Plano for 21 years before moving to Lucas. In Plano, she was president of the International Women's Club of Plano, and currently, she is involved in The Bohemian Circle, the Latin International Poetry Group, and she attends an Argentinian Poetry Club.

Carmen said that her three grown children Marko, Karlo, and Christopher loved reading about their

grandfather when she surprised them with a finished book. "I told them this was the only legacy their grandfather could leave them since he didn't have any money."

Her eyes tear up when she remembers Daniel's passing on January 17, 1987. Carmen's youngest son Christopher was only 6 months old. She recalls, "In the hospital, we put a

picture of Christopher on the night stand, and with the one eye that Daniel was able to move, a tear fell down. It was really touching."

Being with her father on his deathbed reminded Carmen of how much she admired his courage in hard times. "Those storms came to an end," she said. "Facing adversities like my father did has made me stronger. Being able to conquer fear and realize that we all go through tough times makes me stronger."

Last May, Carmen's friends Javier and Minerva Marull hosted a book presentation at their beautiful Willow Bend home. Eighty-eight family members and friends gathered over wine and food,



Author **Carmen Corrales Konneker**, an avid watercolorist, with two of her paintings and her book. She painted the cover art of *My Father's Quest* when she was 10 years old. Profile photo/Mike Newman

and a harpist played soft music in the background.

In attendance was Scott Gunn, a screenwriter for The Gunn Group, LLC. He told guests, "This is the type of story that producers in Hollywood are looking for. They are looking for true stories with heart." He continued, "Human beings have been telling stories for thousands of years. One story that is told by every civilization is the hero's journey. Daniel was a true hero. He wasn't a Hercules but he was a human being who faced life with courage."

Everyone at the presentation was impacted by Daniel's courage and love.

Carmen graciously thanked her guests for their support and related the time she was 7 years old and her father gave her a special gift. Afterward, she said, "I remember his stories well because I felt the emotion when he told them. He loved life; he loved his children; he loved us all."

Then, Carmen held up the book like a soldier unsheathing her sword and said, "This is the true story of my father's quest. This is my gift!"

My Father's Quest is published for Amazon's Kindle (amazon.com) and is also available at wheatmark.com, borders.com, and barnesandnoble.com. You can find Carmen on Facebook or you can learn more about her at myfathersquest.com.

— BRIT MOTT

excerpt

From *My Father's Quest: The True Story of an Orphan's Journey*

Daniel hears her screaming. He drops his sticks and small rocks and runs toward the sound. In the distance he sees a man on a horse. Daniel runs to the well, realizing that is where the screams are coming from. By now his face is practically frozen, and his tears are flowing. He reaches the well and yells, "Mama, Mama! Are you in there?" And he hears a faint voice whimpering.



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