

# BOOKS

## 'Hero Dogs' details training of 'disaster dogs' after bombing

**"Hero Dogs: How a Pack of Rescues, Rejects, and Strays Became America's Greatest Disaster-Search Partners"** by Wilma Melville and Paul Lobo (St. Martin's Press, 336 pages, in stores)

In April 1995, retired school teacher Wilma Melville stepped off a FEMA bus and witnessed first-hand the destruction at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. By her side was Murphy, a FEMA-certified Search and Rescue dog. As Melville worked through the rubble pile and met victims' family members, she told herself that something good had to come from this disaster.

Melville knew the struggles involved with training a search and rescue dog. She also knew there was a shortage of

certified dogs — only 15 in 1995. So just a few months after the Oklahoma City bombing, she created the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (SDF). She promised herself that she would train 168 certified search dog teams, one for each victim of the bombing.

"Hero Dogs" is the story of Melville's journey. The first section introduces the dogs. Since she was starting the foundation with no budget, she focused on strays and shelter dogs. The very thing that made some of these dogs unadoptable — their high energy and extreme prey drive — was key to their success as search and rescue dogs.

Melville used expert dog trainer Phis Davern to prepare the dogs. Prior

to the start of the SDF, it generally took five years to train a dog for search and rescue certification. Davern and Melville streamlined the process to as little as seven months.

I found the description of the training process interesting. To prepare for the disaster areas they would encounter, the dogs needed to be masters of obedience and agility. They trained with balance beams, fire ladders and a custom obstacle dubbed the "wobbly monster."

Since search is a type of hunting game for the dogs, they then needed to hone their skills at finding a live victim, alerting and moving on to the next find. Melville chose to use firefighters as her search dog handlers, since they had prior

training on disasters and could be helpful in other ways when the dogs were done searching. So after the dogs were done training with Davern, they were paired up with firefighters to begin team training. The firefighters found innovative ways to mimic disaster areas and prepare for certification tests, training in city dumps, abandoned or demolished buildings and even fun house ball pits.

After chronicling the successful certification of several dog and handler teams, the book moved into its next part — the disasters. Sept. 11, 2001, was the first large-scale deployment of the SDF's teams, followed by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, various landslides and Haiti. It's not easy to read

the descriptions of the disaster areas these teams encounter, but it definitely gives an idea of the difficulty and importance of their work. And I teared up as I read about the group's first live find.

The book delves into background and details of quite a few of the dogs — too many for my taste. I felt the chapters on the various dogs dragged on a bit. And while Melville's dissatisfaction with the previous state of search dog training is part of her motivation for creating the SDF, I felt like the book spent too much time on complaints about the various training groups.

Still, if you're a dog-lover, this book will give you a new respect for the amazing things they can do. Like that the book



also includes some of the dogs' antics, since even highly-trained dogs find ways to express their innate dog-ness. I found it especially touching that Melville's vision for creating the SDF was her way of honoring Oklahoma City's bombing victims. This book is a reminder that determined people can accomplish great things, especially when accompanied by a dog.

Angela Mabray, for The Oklahoman

## This new book digs through Oklahoma geologist's life

**"Tornadoes, Rattlesnakes & Oil: A Wildcatter's Memories of Hunting for 'Black Gold'"** by Thomas E. Cochrane (River Beach Press, 244 pages, in some stores and online)

I've heard it said, "Memories are not facts." Yet memories are the building blocks of memoirs influenced by one's interpretations of life's experiences. Cochrane's memories span his experiences from his youthful days in New York State's Southern Tier through his years as a high school teacher, oilman,

professional geologist, environmentalist and land developer. He indeed shares his memories mostly by remembering his experiences in the oilfields of Oklahoma and surrounding states.

One of the values I appreciated from reading these memoirs was his honest expressions of feelings about his wives, children and step-children, former employers, business partners and associates. I especially connected with his early experiences as a novice in a major petroleum company; I

remember how I felt in my first teaching job.

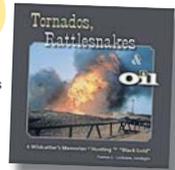
Of course, what Cochrane knows and writes best about the oil field is geology and the continuous additions of science to exploration for and extraction of petroleum products from various types of subsurface geological formations. For that able knowledge and the writing about it, I wish my deceased brother-in-law were alive so that I could ask him questions about the parts of the book I do not understand. It is not that the writing is

unclear; it is my lack of knowledge about geology and the workings of the men and women who function to provide the consuming public with the petroleum products needed to fuel our vehicles, heat our homes, cook our food, etc.

I enjoyed reading "Tornadoes, Rattlesnakes & Oil" because it stimulated my curiosity to learn some ideas and principles the author discusses with expertise. Based on the title I expected more than a short chapter about tornadoes and

rattlesnakes, but, when the paragraphs appeared, I easily related to them.

Richard Rouillard, for The Oklahoman



**Two Upcoming Book Signings!**  
**Lisa Graf 6-7:30pm** on Wednesday, March 13th  
**W. K. Stratton 6-7:30pm** on Thursday, March 14th

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### BEST-SELLERS

#### OKLAHOMA BEST-SELLERS Fiction

- "Reenactments"** by Hai-Dang Phan (Sarabande Books)
- "Mission Critical"** by Mark Greaney (Berkley Books)
- "When You Read This"** by Mary Adkins (Harper)
- "Sea Breeze Academy"** by Bryant Loney (Verona Booksellers)
- "Seventh Sense"** by John Wooley and Robert Brown (Babylon Books)
- "Where the Crawdads Sing"** by Delia Owens (G.P. Putnam's Sons)
- "Down the Ocean: Summer of '64"** by Michael Wright (Michael Wright)
- "The Nix"** by Nathan Hill (Vintage)
- "The Princess Saves Herself in This One"** by Amanda Lovelace (Andrews McMeel Publishing)
- "Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine"** by Gail Honeyman (Penguin)

#### Nonfiction

- "The Happy Cook: 125 Recipes for Eating Every Day Like It's the Weekend"** by Daphne Oz (William Morrow & Company)
- "Killers of the Flower Moon"** by David Grann (Doubleday)
- "Becoming"** by Michelle Obama (Crown Publishing Group)
- "When You Read This"** by Mary Adkins (Harper)
- "Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style"** by Benjamin Dreyer (Random House)
- "The Threat: How the FBI Protects America in the Age of Terror and Trump"** by Andrew MacCabe (St. Martin's Press)
- "Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive"** by Stephanie Land (Hachette)
- "Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: Mastering the Elements of Good Cooking"** by Samin Nosrat (Simon & Schuster)

- "Lost Restaurants of Tulsa"** by Rhys Martin (History Press)
- "The Library Book"** by Susan Orlean (Simon & Schuster)

#### Children's/Young Adult Fiction and Nonfiction

- "Say Something"** by Peter H. Reynolds (Orchard Books)
- "The Word Collector"** by Peter H. Reynolds (Orchard Books)
- "Happy Dreamer"** by Peter H. Reynolds (Orchard Books)
- "Booked"** by Kwame Alexander (Houghton Mifflin)
- "Wilma's Way Home: The Life of Wilma Mankiller"** by Doreen Rappaport (Disney-Hyperion)
- "Legends of the Lost Causes"** by Brad McLelland and Louis Sylvester (Henry Holt & Company)
- "Wild Bird"** by Wendelin Van Draanen (Ember)
- "Skeleton Tree"** by Kim Ventrella (Scholastic Press)
- "Bone Hollow"** by Kim Ventrella (Scholastic Press)
- "The Fang of Bonfire Crossing"** by Brad McLelland and Louis Sylvester (Henry Holt & Company)

The Oklahoma best-sellers list is based on total number of book sales at Best of Books in Edmond, Brace Books and More in Ponca City, Full Circle Bookstore in Oklahoma City and Magic City Books in Tulsa.

#### PUBLISHERS WEEKLY BEST-SELLERS Hardcover Fiction

- "Where the Crawdads Sing"** by Delia Owens (G.P. Putnam's Sons)
- "The Chef"** by James Patterson and Max Dilallo (Little, Brown)
- "The Border"** by Don Winslow (William Morrow)
- "Never Tell"** by Lisa Gardner (Dutton)
- "The Silent Patient"** by Alex Michaelides (Celadon Books)
- "Connections in Death"** by J.D. Robb (St. Martin's Press)

- "The Reckoning"** by John Grisham (Doubleday)
- "Chocolate Cream Pie Murder"** by Joanne Fluke (Kensington)
- "Fire & Blood"** by George R.R. Martin (Ballantine)
- "Nine Perfect Strangers"** by Liane Moriarty (Flatiron)

#### Hardcover Nonfiction

- "Becoming"** by Michelle Obama (Crown)
- "The Threat"** by Andrew G. McCabe (St. Martin's Press)
- "Grateful American"** by Gary Sinise and Marcus Brotherton (Thomas Nelson)
- "It's Not Supposed to Be This Way"** by Lysa TerKeurst (Thomas Nelson)
- "Spearhead"** by Adam Makos (Ballantine)
- "Women Rowing North"** by Mary Pipher (Bloomsbury)
- "Bad Blood"** by John Carreyrou (Knopf)
- "Say Nothing"** by Patrick Radden Keefe (Doubleday)
- "The Uninhabitable Earth"** by David Wallace-Wells (Crown/Duggan)
- "Keto Diet"** by Josh Axe (Little, Brown Spark)

#### Trade Paperbacks

- "The Tattooist of Auschwitz"** by Heather Morris (Harper)
- "The Last Girls of Paris"** by Pam Jenoff (Park Row Books)
- "The Huntress"** by Kate Quinn (William Morrow)
- "Juror 3"** by Patterson/Allen (Grand Central Publishing)
- "Sold on a Monday"** by Kristina McMorris (Sourcebooks Landmark)
- "Total Control"** by David Baldacci (Grand Central Publishing)
- "California Girls"** by Susan Mallery (Mira)
- "Tailsipin"** by Sandra Brown (Grand Central Publishing)
- "Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine"** by Gail Honeyman (Penguin)
- "The Immortalists"** by Chloe Benjamin (G.P. Putnam's Sons)

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**Moderator:**  
**CHRIS BUCKLEW** is recognized as a leading authority on retirement moves and real estate. He and his wife, Nikki, own and operate a local real estate and move management business catering to Oklahoma's mature homeowners. He is also the co-founder and COO of the Seniors Real Estate Institute, an international coaching and training company whose mission is to teach residential real estate professionals best practices concerning late-life transitions.

**Panelist:**  
**ANJA MOTTERN** of OKC Mature Moves is a senior move manager and downsizing expert. Anja is known as the "let it go lady" and serves as project manager, personal confidant, surrogate daughter and community liaison for those choosing to simplify their lifestyle.

**Panelist:**  
**MARIE BRESHEARS** of M & M Estate Services is a professional estate liquidator specializing in selling personal and household items. She provides valuable information on how to prepare for an estate sale, as well as tips to hire an estate liquidator. Marie has been serving Oklahoma City families for over a decade.

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