



# Out in Bookstores

## Hillary Carlip Dazzles with "Odd" Memoir

By Pat Patrick



Being suspended for smoking on the playground in the third grade while impersonating Holly Golightly from the classic Breakfast at Tiffany's will ruin your "permanent record." You'll live a life of mediocrity

supporting each others' books, but also providing support for new writers with these awesome contests we're sponsoring. It's an amazing feeling to be a part of something like that.

PP: *And I understand you all got together recently.*

HC: We met for the first time in person last week. They were all at my reading in New York City. Well, I call it a reading but my readings on my tour have been very different from your standard reading. There are Oddball contests – very interactive. I even perform my comedy juggling song that I won The Gong Show with. They're a lot of fun.

PP: *In talking with fellow Memoirists Collective member Josh Kilmer-Purcell, he discussed his drag persona Aqua as a necessary step in becoming the person he is today. Would you say the same about your adventures?*

HC: I absolutely would. In my life, I've taken on so many personas... all in an effort to find myself. This was my path to self-acceptance.

PP: *Of all of your adventures (or odd-ventures) and escapades, which one stands out to you most?*

HC: One of my faves is my appearance on the Gong Show. It stands out because it was a pivotal moment for me. It helped me realize that I was an oddball, and that's when I began to embrace being different.

PP: *Which one would you most like to forget?*

HC: Oh, the Oprah incident – when I "appeared" on her show. That still resonates.

PP: *Which one did you learn the most from?*

HC: Also Oprah. That was definitely a climatic turning point in my life (without giving too much away about the ending of the book!).

PP: *And what is the oddest thing you have done this week?*

HC: For years I've posed as "Madelyn Evans," who is supposedly my publicist. On my website, freshyarn.com, there is a link to Madelyn for press inquiries. So the other day someone wrote to Madelyn, asking to get in touch with Hillary for a magazine interview, because they just read Queen of the Oddballs.

So of course I wrote back as Madelyn, saying I'd pass on their email to Hillary, and we corresponded back and forth. Only then did I remember that I totally out myself as "Madelyn Evans" several times in my book!

PP: *What's the one question you've always wanted to be asked but never have?*

HC: Will you marry me? Just so I could say NO! Actually my girlfriend of 14 years and I decided we're having a "Fear of Commitment" ceremony.

PP: *Finally, what advice would you give someone who is just coming out of the closet?*

HC: As hard as it may seem and as challenging as it can be, embrace your differences. Even go as far as making them stand out. Be yourself fully.

PP: *Perfect advice from someone who has lived by those simple but powerful words!*

**NOTE: The Lambda Book Group, which meets at Davis-Kidd Booksellers, will discuss Queen of the Oddballs: And Other True Stories from a Life Unaccording to Plan by Hillary Carlip on Wednesday, August 16. There will be a phone-in discussion with Carlip and special DVD footage to highlight this special discussion.**

Queen of the Oddballs by Hillary Carlip is available at Davis-Kidd Booksellers in the Mall at Green Hills and at Outloud! Gay and Lesbian Department Store on Church Street.

with only aspirations of becoming head greeter at Wal-Mart. At least, that is what conventional thought would say.

As evidenced in her memoir Queen of the Oddballs: And Other True Stories from a Life According to Plan, Hillary Carlip thumbs her nose at both her permanent record and conventional thought. And, for this, we are all richer.

No, Carlip has not aspired to head-greeter at Wal-Mart. Instead, she's been a juggler and a fire eater, a cult rock star and appeared on Art Linkletter's House Party. She's been an adolescent pioneer in the Women's Lib movement and appeared on Oprah for her first book Girl Power. Oh, and she also received the first-ever perfect score from hardcore Gong Show judge Rex Reed for her grand prize-winning performance on the show.

Screw the permanent record.

Readers can be thankful that this is Carlip's unofficial mantra. In her book and in her life, Carlip celebrates her oddities, her differences, and everything in between. And in her dazzling, laugh-out-loud memoir, Carlip embraces her individuality, and, in so doing, makes herself accessible to all readers... to everyone who has ever heard those dread words: "this will go down on your permanent record."

Carlip took some time to answer some questions for Inside Out Nashville on her memoir and her odd experiences.

Pat Patrick: *First off, Pee-wee Herman called Queen of the Oddballs "mandatory reading for anybody contemplating fabulousness." Tell me about the blurb from Pee-wee Herman.*

Hillary Carlip: Well, Paul Reubens is actually a friend of mine. I was speaking with my editor on who should do blurbs for the book, whether to use "established authors" or not. And he seemed perfect for my book. I mean, he's the essence of oddball.

PP: *How do you react to being called the female David Sedaris (or would that be the SHE-daris)?*

HC: Oooh.. SHE-daris. That's excellent!

I'm proud to be called that. I feel I'm in great company. Honestly, there isn't a big gay humorous memoir for women like Sedaris's work, so it's very nice to be out there with that.

PP: *What kind of feedback have you gotten from readers since the book has come out?*

HC: The Myspace.com comments, Amazon.com reviews, and emails I've received have been incredible. So many people have shared they've really been inspired on a deep level. And I've just been thankful for the whole experience. It seems like every day I read a very personal response...

I enjoy hearing personal stories of lives not sacrificed... lives lived by people's own rule. It's truly been an amazing experience hearing back from readers.

PP: *You mention Myspace.com. Can I get you to talk about the Memoirists Collective?*

HC: Absolutely! We're a group of four established authors! The collective features Maria Dahvana Headley (The Year of Yes), Josh Kilmer-Purcell (I Am Not Myself These Days), Danielle Trussoni (Falling Through the Earth) and yours truly. It's really great to be able to hook up with other people, other writers. We're all going through the trenches together. We've taken it one-step further and aren't just