

Man does penance for past

A father documents storytime with his daughter in a book for other children



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Author Stephen Raburn, with his wife Ragini Gupta (left) and daughters Anika Raburn (center) and Xia Raburn, wrote his first children's book with his family in mind. "Isobel and Her Dad Take a Trip to the Moon" was made up during bath time for Xia. She liked it so much, Raburn decided to write it down so other children can enjoy it.

## BATH TIME TRIP TO MOON BECOMES KIDS' BOOK

BY SUSAN BROILI  
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ON THEIR MISSIONS TO THE MOON, ASTRONAUTS MAY NOT HAVE COME ACROSS THE LUNA MOTH MUSEUM OR MOONBUCKS COFFEE. BUT WHEN THEY VISITED THAT ORB, DURHAM RESIDENT STEPHEN RABURN AND DAUGHTER XIA ISOBEL DISCOVERED NOT ONLY THOSE TWO PLACES BUT ALSO A MOON PIE FACTORY. RABURN "DOCUMENTED" THEIR TRIP IN HIS BOOK "ISOBEL & HER DAD TAKE A TRIP TO THE MOON."

### AUTHOR APPEARANCE

**WHAT:** Stephen Raburn reads his children's book, "Isobel & Her Dad Take A Trip to the Moon."

**WHEN:** 2 p.m. Saturday.

**WHERE:** The Internationalist Bookstore, 405 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill.

**ADMISSION:** Free.

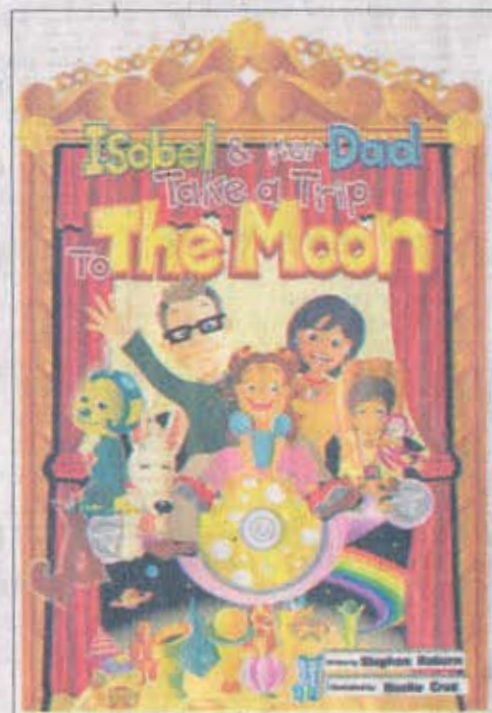
It's actually his first children's book and the direct result of the story he told his daughter at bath time. In it, Isobel and her dad build the rocket that takes them to the moon where she meets Maya, a young moon girl, who shows her around. They play hide and seek in the craters and explore Mons Huygens, the highest point on the moon, while their dads get a Luna Latte at Moonbucks and "discuss intergalactic politics and sports."

"She really liked it," Raburn said in a recent interview. So, he wanted to share it with other children.

He also wanted to promote the father-daughter relationship, he said.

While much of the publishing market is geared to moms, many fathers are

see **RABURN** | page E2



## BOOKS AND LEISURE

## RABURN

FROM PAGE E1

playing a major role in their children's lives — including Raburn and his peers — but there's still some catching up to do in that area, the author said.

"It was a fun project and I mostly did it for my girls," Raburn said of writing the book. "They're definitely the stars of the stories I tell at bedtime. The heroine that's revealed at the end is them."

His parenting philosophy and training in child psychology figure into this approach.

"Undoubtedly, there will be situations in this life that will beat them down. Parents can't protect them from that. This is my best opportunity to bolster that sense of self," Raburn said.

A strong self-image will help them cope with life's troubles, he added.

## Promoting literacy

Reading to young children has other benefits. It not only helps them develop a love of reading but also the skills to do so in terms of language and cognitive development,



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Xia Raburn shows off his father Stephen Raburn's children's book based on a story he told her at bath time.

the author said.

In addition to parenting and writing children's books — a second one is in the works — Raburn serves as executive director of the Volunteer Center of Durham. That agency, in partnership with Credit Suisse, is working with Durham's Partnership for Children to promote children's literacy by having volunteers read to children at child-care centers, Raburn said.

In his children's book, he didn't shy away from using words that he would need to explain to his then 4-year-old daughter. "It's an opportunity to learn new words and

for parents to take the time to explain the words," he said.

Although he wrote the story the way he originally told it, he added some twists he figured adults would enjoy such as the reference to Moonbucks. He sent the manuscript to several publishers and Trafford Publishing in Victoria, B.C., Canada, liked it and wanted to publish it. This publishing house is part of a new trend in which copies are printed on demand. "That's why they're willing to take chances on unpublished authors," Raburn said.

Individuals and book sellers worldwide may order

books this way. So, Raburn's book may be ordered online at [orders@trafford.com](mailto:orders@trafford.com) or purchased at Morgan Imports, Parker & Otis, The Regulator Bookshop and The Playhouse Toy Shop in Durham; The Internationalist Bookstore in Chapel Hill.

Raburn said he enjoyed working with the Japanese-born illustrator Naoko Cruz, who lives in San Francisco. He chose her from a list of illustrators the publisher gave him because he liked her style of art, he added. He wasn't expecting her to replicate his family in her illustrations but that's just what she did based on family photographs he sent her. "She pegged our family really well," Raburn said. So, the characters look like him, Xia 5; Anika, 2 1/2; and wife, Ragini. The illustrator even included the pink monkey his youngest daughter was holding in a photograph.

## Fatherhood fuels writing

He likes to write and, over the years, has written short stories (unpublished) as well as professional articles and newspaper columns. His columns occasionally appear in The Herald-Sun. "Writing a children's book fulfills the

need to publish without that overwhelming and daunting idea of writing a novel," he said.

Being a dad encourages his creative writing. "When they ask for a story, you've got to come up with something. I'm just so much more playful and there's so much whimsy in my life now that I have two little girls," Raburn said.

He aims to be upbeat and positive not only in his writing but also in other areas of his life in order to help offset the negative and to make his children proud of him, he added. Much of his work has centered on child advocacy, including the Napa, California, based, non-profit Center for Child Advocacy and Research he founded.

He's currently working on a second children's book, "Little Fish Gets Three Wishes," that will also be published by Trafford Publishing and illustrated by Cruz. "Anika's more vocal now. I've got to give her more lines," he said. In the "Moon" book, all Anika says is "Wooshie gaga." He expects there'll be another adventure in space. After all, his moon saga ends with Isobel asking "Can we go to Mars?"