

Local author swoops down into the heart of romance

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN

CORRESPONDENT

Since she was a 9-year-old girl, Elaine McCarthy has been writing: A play here, a story there, even a children's book, but nothing really earth-shattering.

Then, while least suspecting it, a romance swept her off her feet — her new novel "The Falconer," an intensely passionate story of a middle-aged woman who, after being diagnosed with inoperable cancer, makes a wish list of things to do before she dies.

Among her wishes is to fly a falcon.

In pursuit of this 12th century field sport of nobility, she meets Rhodri, "The Falconer." Together, in a brief romance, "the two ordinary people's lives are transformed through love," McCarthy writes.

It was then that India, the novel's main character, fulfilled a secret wish, that could never have been written on the list next to river rafting or balloon-



Michael McCollum

Watsonville writer Elaine McCarthy has published her first book.

ing: passion.

McCarthy's life, too, is being transformed.

In signing this, her first book deal, the Watsonville author comes

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away with a six-figure purse from Random House. After she wrote "The Falconer," friends of hers put her in contact with high-powered literary agent Sandra Dijkstra, whose clients include novelists Amy Tan and Susan Faludi.

Even more stunningly, the producers of the blockbuster film "Waiting to Exhale" scooped up the movie rights within 48 hours of reviewing the book. Rights have also been sold in 13 foreign countries and to Readers Digest.

Now financially able, McCarthy plans to travel the world. She just returned from England, France and Italy, and this October she'll travel to India.

After turning 50 and going "over-the-hill," McCarthy realized that —

much like her novel's main character India — she doesn't have forever either, that there is an urgency to life.

"That certainly played a big role in this book," the author said.

"On a visit to Palm Desert, I saw a brochure for 'a falconry experience' and went for it," she said. The soaring falcon is McCarthy's vision of freedom and it lives through India, even while on her death bed.

The story's theme is the discovery of belief, and finding meaning at the end. McCarthy says simply, "The power of love is greater than the power of death, and that is what my novel is about."

She is a self-described "feminine writer." She writes for women, from a woman's perspective. "There are so many differences between men and women — men can never understand," she said.

After two children, three marriages and innumerable dull secre-

tarial jobs, McCarthy says to her readers, "Never give up," that perseverance does seem to pay off. McCarthy now can check off one item on her own "to do" list — getting a novel published.

A resident of Watsonville for 4 1/2 years with her husband Brian, an Aptos attorney, and her 20-year-old daughter, Alegria, McCarthy wrote her book last year in only three weeks. She spent the first week organizing her thoughts and hammered it out in the second and third, she said.

She is working on another romance novel and a theatrical comedy, "Ask Your Angel," will be performed by the Actors Theatre in Santa Cruz July 21.

McCarthy will read from "The Falconer" and sign copies of her novel Thursday, beginning at 7 p.m., at Crossroads Books, 1935 Main St. The store's phone number is 728-4139.