



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Susana Herrera, an instructor at E.A. Hall School, reads from her book, "Mango Elephants in the Sun," to the staff at E.A. Hall Friday during noon break.

Local teacher turns into an author

By TARMO HANNULA
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF WRITER

An E.A. Hall instructor has just been catapulted into the limelight both locally and internationally with the publication of her book, "Mango Elephants in the Sun: And Other Stories from My Life in an African Village."

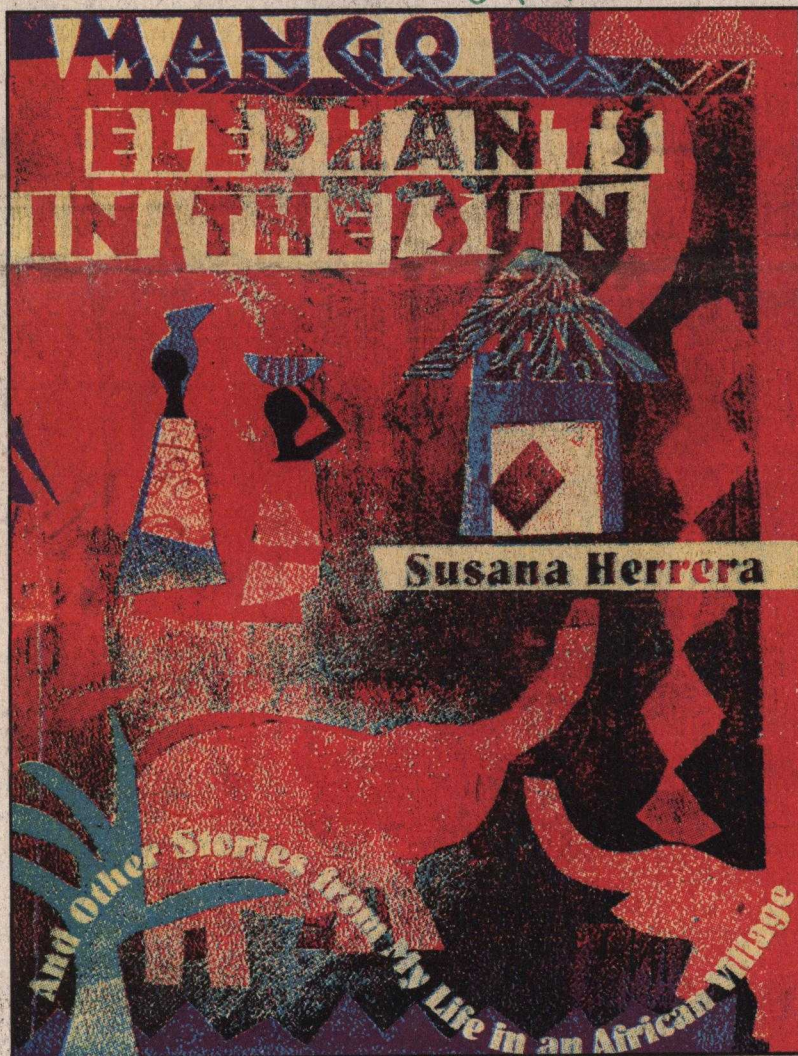
Susana Herrera of Aptos, who teaches literature and social studies at E.A. Hall School in Watsonville, penned her first book in 1998. When Herrera sent out an initial draft of five (of the 62 stories) to 10 publishers, Shambhala Publications expressed interest within three weeks, Herrera said. "Two weeks after they expressed interest, the book sold," Herrera said.

Ten thousand copies are now slated for publication. They will hit the book shelves within a few weeks, Herrera said. Mango Elephants is already slated for translation in Chinese and Taiwanese, Herrera said.

National Geographic, Smithsonian Magazine and TV's The Travel Channel have expressed interest in interviewing Herrera about her book which is based on her accounts of being a volunteer in the Peace Corps in 1992 through 1994.

"This work is a combination of travelogue, spiritual memoirs, poems, journal excerpts and letters home crafted into 62 stories that reveal a positive view of Africa," Herrera said. "It is essentially a Peace Corps book about Africa." Herrera said most of the book is based on experiences she had while living in the village of Guidigu in northern Cameroon.

Herrera said one story was inspired by a lizard which she adopted as a pet. Another story revolves around a 16 year old girl learning to ride a bicycle. The chapter, "An American Bicycle" explores cultural and emotional differences, mate-



The cover of Susana Herrera's book, "Mango Elephants in the Sun: And Other Stories from My Life in an African Village."

rialism and more in the two page chapter. "African Eyes," "Dear Mom, 1992," "Heart and Soul," and "Fabric of my Family" are just a sampling of a few of Herrera's chapters.

When Shambhala Publications contacted Herrera, they told her that they had never been as excited about publishing a book. Random House is assisting Shambhala in the publication. Kim Duva of National Accounting and Marketing for Barnes and Noble said, "Mango Elephants" was amazing. Truly a top contender for one of the best books I've ever read from Random House.

Herrera, who is a marathon runner and has completed 16 of the 26.2

mile runs, said her 250-page book has promise of being used on the high school level for education about Africa.

"The book is fun," Herrera said. "It has hilarious moments, I think, and a simplicity that Africa taught me. America couldn't teach me this kind of profound simplicity."

Nearing the end of her fourth year of teaching grades six, seven and eight at E.A. Hall, Herrera said she is just ecstatic about the attention her book is getting. "There is an energy about the book that is not even me," Herrera said. "I'm just standing back and watching this thing take off."

Authors

WRP 3-13-99