

9am

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7:30

7:30pm

SUNFLOWER MAZE
NO. 5 CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM CENTER
LYMAN ORCHARDS, FAIRFIELDJAZZ: RUFUS REED
MUSSE 'CRIBSET' HARMON II OPENS AT 6
BUSHELL PARK, HARTFORD

FRONTS: BLASTING OFF BLAZERS

THE HARTFORD COURANT MONDAY, JULY 30, 2007 \$2.00

SPILLING THE BEANS | WITH DINA KOUTAS POCH

A Tactical Guide: The Care And Feeding Of In-Laws

BY MARVELL PELLO
CORRANT JINK COLUMNIST

Did you know that a persistent fear of one's in-laws is called *acousophobia*? And did you know that *Isley* is the growing card-induced "Father-In-Law Day"? And did you know Fairfield native Dina Koutas Poch — whose



in-laws, Jerry and Kathy Poch, live in West Hartford — has written a book called "Why in-laws." Owl Books, New York \$15), a funny guidebook that will help women "fall in love with his family, use passive-aggressive over-indulgent, grandkid-crawling, stress-inducing, Bible-thumping in-law to a time!"

Poch, who insists she adores her in-laws, took time out from elaborating the release of her first book this month to share in-law stories and "Spill the Beans" with *Jerk*.

Q: How do your in-laws feel about a book that takes potshots at in-laws?

A: My in-laws had some difficulty with their own in-laws, so they have a sense of humor. I get along

with them. They think the book is hilarious. There are a couple of things about them in it, but my parents are also definitely in the book. My mother is the typical Southern belle. And my parents are Greek and hot-tempered. They had much more potential as far as in-law stories were concerned.

Q: Why is it aimed at women who are trying to get

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Her Own In-Laws Are Gems, She Insists, But Others ...

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along with in-laws? Don't men have the same issues with the extended family once they get married?

A: I wanted it to be a women's guide, a sister's connection. Men don't always dish about their in-laws. I talked to about 200 women who did. There were a few men with stories and I did use the stories in the book. I would write chapters and give them to my husband, and my mother-in-law and father-in-law to read.

Q: The assumption would be that your own in-laws are what prompted the book. Did they?

A: The idea was actually just something I thought of as a writer. Talking about in-laws is a pretty fertile subject, writing-wise. Women are passionate when it comes to talking stories about their in-laws. They want to tell you how great or how horrible they are. My book not only talks about mothers and fathers-in-law, but the rest of the family. Difficult relatives like the uncle who hits on you or the crazy aunt who is obsessed with her dog. How to manage family vacations. How to get through a wedding with your future in-laws. I'm actually lucky in-law-wise. I dated my husband for 10 years before getting married two years ago. I grew up around my in-laws, so our relationship was not so much of an issue by the time we got married. **Q: Do you have any children, and if**

you do, what kind of in-law will you be?

A: We have no children yet, but I am sure I am going to be a pain-in-the-butt in-law. I hope to God any future daughter-in-law or son-in-law will have a great sense of humor. That's how I deal with everything. A relationship with an in-law is a hard thing. It's like being stuck on a road trip with someone. You just have to figure each other out.

Q: Why is a relationship with in-laws such a challenge?

A: The premise is that when you marry someone, you have complementing personalities. You are different. So there you are going into a family that is totally opposite than you. You are coming into a family that isn't used to people like your kind of person.

Q: It's 2007, for heaven's sake. Aren't couples more independent and their parents more sunny? Why is it even an issue?

A: It is a timeless issue. People will always have to deal with in-laws. The culture may have changed and people are older when they are married or don't live near their families or are more independent, but you also end up together sooner or later.

Q: What were the saddest stories you heard when putting the book together?

A: There were stories about in-laws that stole from their children, things



like that but I did not include them in the book. I'm not a psychiatrist. It's a lighthearted book but with some good advice for those everyday situations. How to split your time between parents for the holidays. How to handle the "when are you going to have a baby" thing to situations like what to do when your in-laws insist on blasting the air conditioning and you are frozen solid, how to spend a vacation with your in-laws and helpful phrases so you can talk to in-laws who don't speak English.

Q: What is your best piece of advice to the bride-to-be for making life with in-laws tolerable?

A: Create boundaries. Don't give out your e-mail address or your cellphone number to a meddling mother-in-law. That way, you have some control over the interaction. Stay out of family fights. Don't take sides. It could come back to haunt you. And be a little empathetic. They are trying to figure you out, too.

Dina Koutas Poch will do a book signing Aug. 13 at Borders in Fairfield.