

# Los Alamos Monitor

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## Local woman recounts a fascinating childhood

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Younger family members and friends were surprised when they heard stories of Karen Boutilier Kendall's adventurous childhood.

"They'd tell me, 'You really need to write these stories down, you really need to write a book,'" Kendall said during an interview Thursday.

She married Greg Kendall right out of high school. As they lay in a field staring up at a meteor shower in the late 1980s, the couple discussed the idea of her writing down all the stories of her unusual childhood.

The Business Operations manager for the Los Alamos Department of Public Utilities has completed the book she began writing more than a decade ago.

The stories of her childhood in "Berkeley to Beijing" are remarkable. She was a preacher's child raised during the 1960s. Her father was not the ste-

reotypical minister. She grew up living in communal strike houses, walking United Farm Worker picket lines, working on political campaigns and

surviving the violence of Washington, D.C. and the Poor People's Campaign.

Kendall also writes of her experiences attending marches and protest rallies for civil rights and the anti-war movement. She made picket signs, cared for her brothers and sister and obsessively worried about the social and political problems of the day.

"The thing I liked about the book is that in her short life, Karen was really part of some exciting parts of our country's history marching with Cesar Chavez and traveling to China with Shirley MacLaine for the first American Women's Friendship Delegation," Chamber Member Services Coordinator Katy Korkos said. "I thought it was a real page turner - you can't wait to see what happens next."



MacLaine invited the then 12 year old to become the youngest member of the First American Women's Friendship Delegation to China in 1973.

She joined the delegation, which consisted of 11 women including a four-woman film crew. The resulting Oscar nominated documentary, "The Other Half of the Sky: a China Memoir" aired in 1975.

Kendall, 48, was 32 when she received her college degree. She has worked in accounting ever since.

"In college there were still perceptions of jobs for men and jobs for women," Kendall said. "A professor told me, 'You're a woman of child bearing age and no top-tiered accounting firm will hire you.'"

That sentiment made Kendall all the more determined to be a success in the field. She completed her degree and received offers from Price Water-

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CAROL A. CLARK/Monit

**MEMOIR** Local author Karen Boutilier Kendall discusses her new book "Berkeley to Beijing" that details her unique and exciting childhood.

## AUTHOR

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house and Coopers and Lybrand.

She served as vice president of a midsized national company out of Baltimore.

"To me that was a huge accomplishment ... I kind of looked back at that professor and it felt good to prove him wrong," she said.

The Kendall's chose not to have children.

"It was not about career," she said. "I had raised my siblings and was involved until I was 18 and so I'd done that."

They also made a conscious choice to leave corporate America and that huge paycheck behind to have more balanced lives when they moved to New Mexico.

"Part of the reason for doing the book is that lots of people do extraordinary things and have unique experiences and I thought it would be interesting to write them down," she said. "I am an obsessive reader. For me as a kid books were a huge escape – biographies, mysteries, historical fiction and non-fiction."

She spoke of feeling thrilled the first time she saw her book on local bookshelves.

"For me, walking over to Otowi Station and the library and seeing my book was a big deal," Kendall said. "You don't write a book like this because it's going to be a career or a meal ticket but because you want the stories out there."

"Berkeley to Beijing" is interesting for all age groups, she said. It's also a good story for teenage girls in terms of her being very strong. It sets an example to set your own destiny and have control over your own destiny, she said.

"It's about taking everything that happened to you as a young kid as being a lesson and not letting it hold you back," Kendall said. "I hope in that way it's an inspiration to people."

"Berkeley to Beijing" is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IUniverse and is available directly from Kendall as an auto-graphed copy.

Kendall's cousin Jesse Hernandez is an artist who designed the book's cover for her.

The Kendall's are donating 5 percent of all author profits from the book to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

"Greg and I chose NAMI to honor my mother's memory and her sustained demonstration of humor, grace and love in the face of adversity," she said. "It

is also in hopes of both increased research to find better medical treatments and pressure on government for better support and programs for people living with mental illness."

Kendall will sign her book from 6-7:30 p.m., Thursday at Otowi Station at 1350 Central Avenue.

"Otowi Station loves our local authors and will offer 20 percent off for the book during the month of July," Kendall said.

Kendall also will be the featured author at the Author's Speak series at 7 p.m., at Mesa Public Library Jan. 28.

For information about "Berkeley to Beijing", access [www.kbkendall.com](http://www.kbkendall.com).

## From the heart

"Karen Kendall's book stirs the heart. With amazing recall, she tells the story, not just of a young girl's adventures in the world of activism, but of a loving network of extended family – such an inspiring model of the supportive community we need more than ever in our troubled world." – Louise Dunlap, *workshop leader and author of Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing*. [www.undoingsilence.org](http://www.undoingsilence.org).

"I urge you to read this book. It is the remarkable, well-written story of a young girl's coming of age in the midst of the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. It is also the untold story of a brave, committed family struggling to stay together while throwing themselves into the heart of Cesar Chavez' farm workers' movement." – the Rev Chris Hartmire, former Director of the California Migrant Ministry.

"Many successful women leaders have a fascinating story to tell, but few have a story as fascinating and inspiring as Karen's! You'll be blown away by this incredible book about a young girl growing up while navigating both family and political upheaval; traveling to Mao's China with Shirley MacLaine to explore women's liberation; and integrating herself into a boy's physical education class to prove equality required under Title IX was possible. You'll be amazed as you read about how this young girl stood up and fought for her right to determine her own destiny. It will make you want to stand up and fight for yours too!" – Susan Davis-Ali, PhD, *President, Leadership1, Inc. Author of "How to Become Successful Without Becoming a Man."*