

by Linda Theresa Raczek

ILLUSTRATED BY Katalin Olah Ehling



The book jacket design features a batik by Katalin Olah Ehling.

Book review

11/30/91 TAOS NEWS "TEMPO"

## Lively illustrations bring new children's book to life

By Rick Romancito  
The Taos News

Each spring, among the Ute Indians of southern Colorado, the four-day-long Bear Dance was considered a celebration of life, love and tradition.

One way those virtues were passed on to succeeding generations was through the tribe's oral tradition. That basis of knowledge has spread further with the publication of "The Night the Grandfathers Danced" (1995, Northland Publishing Company, Flagstaff, Ariz., \$14.95 hard cover) by Linda Theresa Raczek and illustrated by Katalin Olah Ehling.

Ehling plans to be on hand for a book-signing from 2-4 p.m. Saturday (Dec. 2) at Moby Dickens Bookshop, 124A Bent Street, followed by a reception at the Wade Gallery, 208 Paseo del Pueblo Norte.

Ehling has shown her work in Taos art galleries and has a reputation as a master of the batik dying process. Her illustrations for "The Night the Grandfathers Danced" complement a warm narration entwined around this ages-old story.

The only problem with the illustrations is one that has to do with a lot of books for children that are illustrated by well-known artists. The questions these collaborations always tend to raise are: Is this a book about the art that places the story secondary or is about the story illustrated by the art?

On the one hand, here is a book with colorful pictures that are lively and attractive to look at, rendered in a time-consuming and skillful process involving a wax-resist technique. But, in a way, they don't quite bring the story to life for children who generally are drawn to bold,

immediately readable images to which they can easily relate.

"The Bear Dance came about, one story goes, because long, long ago, a bear taught a special springtime dance to a Ute hunter wandering alone in the woods," Raczek writes. "Bear, the wisest of all animals and most courageous next to Mountain Lion, is a brother to the True People (*Weeminuche*, or Ute Mountain Utes) and a bearer of magic, and so the hunter taught the dance to his people. Today, Bear Dance continues as an annual celebration of winter's passing and the reunion of families and friends."

The book follows Autumn Eyetoo, a young Ute girl who looks forward to the Bear Dance each spring, especially this year because this is the first time she will get to dance. Left without anyone with whom to dance, Eyetoo finds a partner that is surprising to all.

Raczek lives in a turn-of-the-century home near the Four Corners area. She has worked as a naturalist, sailor, social worker and children's attorney for the Ute Mountain tribe. Her written work has appeared in many children and young adult magazines.

Ehling was born in Hungary in 1941 and moved from war-torn Germany to the United States in 1950. She received her art education at the American Academy of Art in Chicago, *L'Ecole de Dessin de la Mode di Mademoiselle Boizot* in Paris, France and Phoenix College in Arizona. She discovered batik in the late 1960s "and was immediately hooked," the book jacket reads.

A resident of Arizona since 1968, Ehling's subject matter is largely the people and places of the Southwest.

"The Night the Grandfathers Danced" is the first children's book for both.