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Fans who lined up to see Julie Andrews at R.J. Julia Booksellers in Madison weren't expecting the beloved star to descend from the heavens, her feet pointed out, with one hand gripping a serviceable black umbrella. But they weren't disappointed with the actress-turned children's author. Above, Dame Andrews with her daughter Emma Watson Hamilton, her co-author.

# CLIMB EV'RY MOUNTAIN

## Julie Andrews inspires in Madison

By Lisa Reisman  
Special to the Times

On a recent wind-swept Wednesday afternoon, a crowd of 300 stretched down the sidewalk from R.J. Booksellers in Madison, alive with anticipation - and with the sound of music. Marilyn Loney of Niantic strummed her banjo. Megan Kairiss and Stephanie Nixon, students at Haddam-Killingworth Middle School, along with an impromptu chorus of strangers from all parts of Connecticut and beyond, belted out such standards as "Edelweiss," "My Favorite Things," and "Climb Ev'ry Mountain."

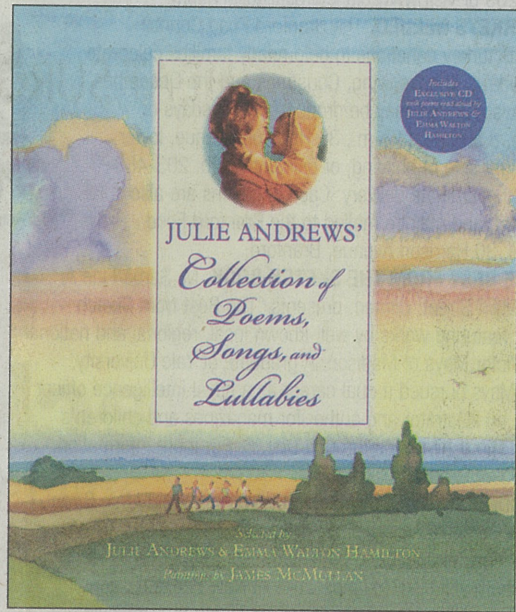
Pockets of kids from Deep River jumped up and down in excitement. Some yodeled "The Lonely Goatherd" from the puppet show scene in "The Sound of Music." Others sang "Do Re Mi." All were waiting for one of the most beloved figures in the entertainment world to appear.

They weren't expecting Julie Andrews to descend from the heavens, her feet pointed out, with one hand gripping a serviceable black umbrella. Or, with her arms outstretched, to fill the hills - or, in this case, the bookstore - with the sound of music.

The clear-as-a-bell soprano whose singular four-octave range led to international stardom on stage and screen is all but silenced. In 1998, she underwent routine surgery to remove nodules from her vocal cords. The procedure was botched. Internal scarring limited her vocal range and ability to hold notes. Following repeated efforts to repair the damage, including an unsuccessful attempt to

have new vocal cords implanted, she's been forced to curtail her singing and speaking engagements.

"I've got about five good base notes, so if you wanted a nice rendition of 'Old Man River,' I could manage it," said Andrews, who at 74, remains as upbeat and poised as ever. "But it was quite devastating, and I was fairly depressed for a while. And then it was



Her latest work, a carefully crafted, lavishly illustrated book titled "Julie Andrews' Collection of Poems, Songs, and Lullabies," copies of which she was in Madison to sign, combines her passion for music, poetry, and the arts.

either stay that way for the rest of my life or get on and do something."

So these days, with a resilience reminiscent of Maria Von Trapp, the legendary actress is spending more time creating characters than portraying them. Her latest work, a carefully crafted, lavishly illustrated book titled "Julie Andrews' Collection of Poems, Songs, and Lullabies," copies of which she was in Madison to sign, combines her passion for music, poetry, and the arts. As Dame Julie herself put it, "writing children's books has given me a new creative outlet. I've never been busier. It's wonderful."

That her fans wouldn't be treated to the crystalline voice magically soaring and swooping certainly didn't diminish the palpable sense of anticipation in the brisk October air.

"I just want to tell her how much she's inspired me," said the middle-schooler Kairiss, pausing between "Climb Ev'ry Mountain" and "So Long, Farewell," as she clutched her hard-backed copy of the "Julie Andrews' Collection."

Carol Giese of East Lyme had already introduced herself to the icon at Oakdale Theater ten years before, but was willing to stand outside the bookstore for upwards of three hours on the cool, windy day to see Ms. Andrews again. As was Michelle Nemeth, a pediatrician in Guilford, who felt as though she had "grown up with Andrews." And Cynthia Minichio of Branford who, because of Julie Andrews, almost became a nun.

Emily Steinson, who is visually impaired, had always taken to the "sweet quality" of Andrews' voice." Having listened to the ups



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and downs endured by the actress in the audiobook version of her 2008 memoir "Home," Steinson was further impressed by the courage of a world-renowned celebrity to reveal that "she hasn't led the charmed life that a lot of people might think she's had."

As news spread down the line that "she's here! she's here!," Sherry Haller of West Hartford wondered at the sheer breadth of

Andrews' appeal. "It's really amazing, in this day of cultural segmentation, of myriad cable stations, and so much attention paid to what will draw which demographic - here is someone who transcends all that."

No better proof of which were the three generations represented by the Slubowski family of Guilford, seemingly unfazed by their position toward the end of the line. "We all sing along to 'Mary Poppins,'" said

Deirdre Slubowski, whose two-year-old daughter Nola stood between her grandparents, industriously sipping her grape juice and quietly looking forward to meeting the voice of her all-time favorite song "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

Inside the bookstore, Andrews, elegantly clad in a pink pantsuit, received her adoring following with her trademark grace, alongside her daughter and co-author Emma

Watson Hamilton. "My daughter likes to tell me, 'you've just found a new way of using your voice now'," she was heard saying in her impeccable British accent. "I have found a different way. It's a new voice."

Not that the other one is entirely forgotten. After all, it still echoed through the center of Madison for a few hours on an October afternoon.