

BOOKS COMING OUT EVERYWHERE

By CINDY ADAMS

BOOKS. Everyone's doing books. Even citizens I never heard about are immortalizing folks I never heard about. A few even on celebrities who did *not* suffer fathers who abused them or mothers who were drunk. More new books arriving than we have in the Fifth Avenue library.

Barricade's shipping out "Ethel Merman: The Biggest Star on Broadway." Author **Geoffrey Mark** says she loved to "point her massive breasts," and was insecure as a woman though tough as nails in business. Yearned to have "class" but didn't. Was "gaudy, cheaply dressed, badly coif'd, cursed like a sailor" told whoever to "go f - - - yourself." Loved booze. Loved sex. Married guys, even better. Ladies, also maybe OK. **Ernest Borgnine**, married to her for 20 minutes a lifetime ago, still can't even hear her name.

Next time B'way revives "Gypsy" or "Annie, Get Your Gun," remember it was this "stingy, angry, mistrustful, lonely" lady born Ethel Zimmerman who first made it famous.

The literati are into the legit. Next year, first anniversary of playwright Arthur Miller's death, **Tony** ("Angels in America") **Kushner** does an inaugural volume of Miller's works. Think, "Death of a Salesman," "All My Sons," "Crucible," "The Misfits," which the man wrote for then-wife Marilyn Monroe . . . And Overlook Press publishes **Edward Albee** on Edward Albee. Volume Three of "The Collected Plays of Edward Albee." Think "Lolita," "The Goat, or Who's Sylvia?" and "The Play About the Baby."

And as we speak, critic **Lawrence Frascella's** book about James Dean, "Live Fast, Die Young" hits the shelves. It talks of unbridled sexuality; Sal Mineo, who became filmdom's first known gay teenager; "Rebel Without a Cause" 's 43-year-old director Nicholas Ray, who had an affair with 16-year-old Natalie Wood; and the fact that James Dean died 50 years ago.

JANN Wenner gave a party for J. Crew CEO **Mickey Drexler's** wife, **Peggy Drexler**. She wrote a book. Naturally. Everyone is writing a book. Title's "Raising Boys Without Men." One guest, **Bette Midler** in today's look — blouse, skirt, heels — said her beautifying New York parks and highways is having its 10th anniversary. She's Bettified 60 parks in Manhattan alone . . . Emir of Qatar supposedly donating \$100 mil to Hurricane Katrina relief . . . Next month **Jean-Luc**, restaurateur who owns Jean-Luc's on Columbus Avenue and Madam Tong's in the Hamptons, grows his empire. It'll be sushi and steak at 108 Greenwich. Since it's near Wall Street, he may name it Argent (that's French for money.) That's also near where the Indians sold Manhattan, so why not call it Wampum? Here's a note: Downtown and Upper East and West Side property frenzy

has reduced to moderation. Even anything priced over 7 percent of its value isn't selling. So now's the time to buy. You're welcome.

IN the last stages of **Britney Spears'** pregnancy, it was Frappuccinos with lashings of whipped cream and buckets of fried chicken. Starbucks and L.A.'s fast foodery Koo Koo Roo may be the only ones not applauding the newest Federline.

WHILE in the city the King of Jordan's court muttering about how come we couldn't catch even **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**. Forget **Osama bin Laden** who's an ailing 6-foot-plus giant in a desert where the highest structure is a cave. This man Zarqawi has only one leg. One. Jordanians know this because, they say, they were around when that leg came off. So, basically, they're burbling how they don't understand why the United States, the most powerful nation on Earth, can't get one dude who's on dialysis and another who's on crutches.

FIXER extraordinaire **Donald Trump** fixed the Wolflman Rink when this city seemed unable to do it until hell — not the rink — froze over. So in terms of woulda/shoulda/coulda, I phoned him for his opinion of the New Orleans operation. Said Trump: "People there always knew the entire city hangs in the balance if the levee goes. We're not talking of nature. We're talking of human nature. We're talking of putting up a wall of steel and concrete that holds back that water. Whoever was responsible for the maintenance and overseeing of that wall should be treated with venom."

Oh, and by the way, there's a rumor you're to be a daddy again? "No. Not true. At least not that I know of."

GENTS lolling around **Calvin Klein's** 60th & Mad store got jollies out of seeing other gents adjust their various parts while trying on clothes in the dressing area near the open window.

Only in New York, kids, only in New York.

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