

# Elizabeth Evans Draper

Owner, Editor Elizabeth Evans Editorial LLC  
Member since November 2021

Marketers at Visit Milwaukee need look no further than Elizabeth Evans Draper as someone who connects the Fresh Coast and the creative class to live a good life here.

“People tend to be surprised when I tell them how much I enjoy fishing,” the accomplished editor and literary advisor told a 2012 *Writer’s Digest* interviewer in New York City. She compared herself to Ratty from *The Wind in the Willows*: “Nothing is better than messing around in boats.”



*The Draper Family*

But a fuller understanding of the Ratty comparison surfaced in Elizabeth’s Rotary interview. That’s because, like Ratty, Elizabeth seeks deeper meaning, beauty, and intensity in situations others may see through practical eyes. In other words, she’s an editor who helps others transform personal experiences into memorable tales. Elizabeth’s literary dreams began to form in the sixth grade while at the University School of Milwaukee, when she wrote a novel for fun after school. Eventually, she finished a 70-page suspense tale, printed a copy in rainbow ink, and circulated it among her classmates. When her English teacher urged her to reprint it in the usual black ink on white paper, Elizabeth resisted.

“I thought it was *much* more creative that way,” Elizabeth says, laughing.



*Elizabeth and her daughter Bea  
trout fishing*

As the sole proprietor of Elizabeth Evans Editorial, LLC., Elizabeth serves clients worldwide with stories to tell. Some are new writers seeking to hone their craft. Others are loyal and accomplished clients from the past. For all clients she offers a full range of editorial and publishing consultation services from creative brainstorming to ghostwriting and everything in between. Her attitude: It “has to be fun” for the editor and the client. It’s a portfolio of knowledge and skills she began building at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, noted for teaching writing. After her BA in English literature, it was on to the University of San Francisco where she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing.

West Coast experience was gained vetting submissions at the San Francisco literary magazine *Zyzyva* and then as a literary agent at Kimberley Cameron & Associates, where Elizabeth represented authors and pitched and sold their book projects to publishers. But to be accomplished in writing and publishing, one must “do” New York City. So, she chased her dream and joined the Jean V. Naggar Literary Agency. She smiles, fondly recalling all the “breakfasts, lunches, coffees, and parties” in the Big Apple.

She lived in a “sleepy little part” of Manhattan along the East River called Stuyvesant Town. “It was a dream come true,” she said, but a little short of fishing opportunities, she told the *Writer’s Digest* interviewer. For 12 years she helped dozens through the writing and publishing process, representing more than 60 authors, including *New York Times* bestsellers, earning their praise and respect.



*Elizabeth with her husband Rob in Central Park, New York.*

“Elizabeth is equal parts warm and powerful, and she gets it done,” said Mari Andrew, author of The NYT bestseller AM I THERE YET?

“Elizabeth awed us with her sage advice, generous investment of time and unfaltering belief in us,” gushed Deb McKinney, co-author of BEYOND THE BEAR, one of Elizabeth’s favorites. It’s a riveting story about a bear attack and two lives of resolve and resiliency that followed.

Another favorite is THE GIFT OF OUR WOUNDS, a story of understanding, healing, and personal transformation that emerged from the tragic 2012 shooting at the Oak Creek Sikh temple. A former white supremacist and Sikh form an unlikely friendship and craft a message of love told in prose and on the lecture circuit.

“I love stories. I am interested in the remarkable experience, the overcoming of odds, the human spirit,” Elizabeth explained about her favorites. Looking to those who need to overcome the odds caused her to see the untapped potential of young writers in New York City schools in some of the city’s most challenged neighborhoods.

In 2009, she launched “Room to Write,” a publishing industry volunteer program of more than 70 professionals from a dozen agencies and houses to promote youths’ writing. Their service included teaching creative writing, creating a journal of student work, organizing literary contests, and hosting student and parent tours to publishing houses. Returning to Milwaukee in 2012, Elizabeth declared she wanted to work “happily from home with my dog under my desk and a cup of tea always in reach.” Elizabeth acknowledges Milwaukee is not New York but says there is a dedicated writing community here, an impressive group of teachers, writers, and librarians determined to make a literary difference in the city.

She cites Boswell’s Daniel Goldin as one of those making a difference and credits him for providing a list of literary contacts to get her grounded here. Elizabeth now counts several of the names on that list as close friends. One connection led her to an adjunct role teaching creative nonfiction at Cardinal Stritch. At present, she works part-time while tending to children William (9), Beatrice (6), and Sophie (1), and that means getting them to Montessori school or the soccer field, where she coaches, too.

“It’s all about the kids at the moment,” she explains.

Her husband, Robert Draper, is an investment manager Elizabeth met in New York. He had doubts about moving to the Midwest, but “he’s now probably Milwaukee’s biggest cheerleader.” The couple imagined they’d make several trips to Chicago a year to keep up the big city life, but now finds Milwaukee keeps them plenty busy. In particular, their family enjoys performances at the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, exploring local nature trails, and cheering on the Milwaukee Bucks.

“Rotary is such a great way to know people of the city,” Elizabeth said. “It has power and reach. If you have an idea or want to see change in the city, Rotary can connect you. It’s extraordinary.”hj

This fall, Elizabeth plans to resume work full-time for the first time since the birth of her daughter Sophie. She also looks forward to having additional time to volunteer in the community, including at the Maryland Avenue Montessori School, Christ Church Episcopal, and of course, Rotary. And maybe she’ll check out the salmon in the Milwaukee River or take the family fishing up North to some childhood lakes with memories.

**Editor’s Note:** *Rotary People of Action is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Jeff Smoller.*