

# People

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## Tabasco finally gets her book after 28 years

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**T**abasco the raccoon met an untimely end in the 1970s, but author Lyn Hancock has brought her back to life with words.

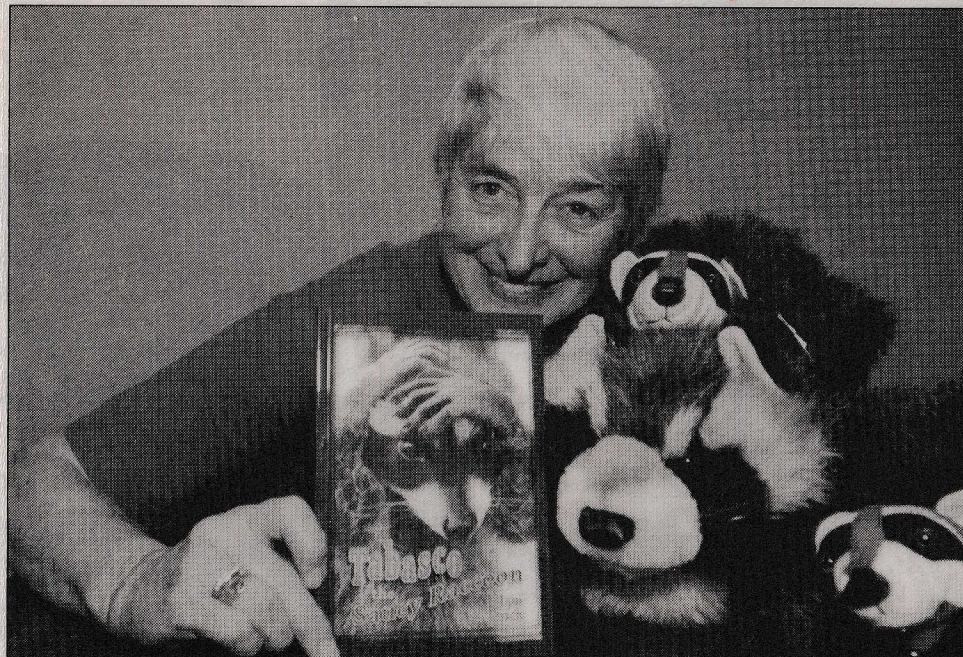
Hancock shared more than a year of her life with an orphaned raccoon born in the attic of a Vancouver home and given to her by the Children's Zoo in 1977. She raised the animal in a third-floor, no-pets Burnaby apartment and took Tabasco everywhere she went, eventually releasing her in Coquitlam.

It was there, at the base of Burke Mountain, that Tabasco died.

"People were telling me I had to release Tabasco," Hancock says. "I didn't think she should be, really, but the pressure to put her in the wild was so strong I did, I released her. She loved people too much, she loved kids particularly. She followed the wrong family home."

In 1978 Hancock began writing the story of the raccoon's short life — *Tabasco the Saucy Raccoon* — based on experience, stories from those who encountered her, diaries, letters and notes. However, it was a story she couldn't finish.

"My publisher at the time in 1978 wanted me to make up the ending, to do a Disney as call it," Hancock says. "Why I didn't get the book finished was I wanted to tell the truth, because I write non-fiction."



Paul vanPeenen/NOW

**Lyn Hancock with her book and some of the stuffed raccoons she takes to schools.**

It took 28 years before she could tell the whole story, writing the last chapter as it happened, and Hancock hoped she was doing the right thing.

"Probably, if I had written it in 1978, I was so angry with how this raccoon dies, I was so

angry at everything I probably just couldn't see the other side. Twenty-eight years later you mellow a bit and you see the other side. You're more forgiving," Hancock says.

"Although I can never forget, I can forgive." Hancock says something happened after she

finished writing the last chapter of the book that made her certain she'd done the right thing. She left her computer and walked out the back door and saw, for the first time in 10 years of living in her Nanaimo home, a huge raccoon. The animal stared at her before lumbering slowly away.

"I was so stunned ... I went back to the computer and I wrote another couple of paragraphs," she says. "Tabasco is alive again."

Since *Tabasco the Saucy Raccoon* came out in 2006, Hancock has been touring schools giving talks and writing workshops. Last week, she was giving talks and putting on workshops in Coquitlam and Surrey schools.

Hancock is best known for her first four non-fiction books: *There's a Seal in my Sleeping Bag*, *There's a Raccoon in my Parka*, *Love Affair with a Cougar* and *An Ape Came Out of my Hatbox*.

She has written a total of 19 books about her encounters with the wild — including raccoons, bears, cougars, eagles and apes — and aims to spread the love of reading and writing to children.

"I make writing live. I use my passion and I get them to write what they're passionate about," Hancock says. "Tabasco, for 28 years, was a bunch of papers on the desk. Now Tabasco is a living book, and that's the magic of books, the magic of writing, how you can come to life again."

• For more information, visit [www.lynhancock.com](http://www.lynhancock.com).