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Author, musician has had no shortage of challenges

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By **Brendan Carpenter**

Life has thrown a lot at David Feldman — drug addiction, spinal problems, intestinal issues, cancer. But he fought through all of it, and now has published a new novel, “The Neighborhood,” about 1970s Valley Stream.

That’s not all: Feldman, 65, of Long Beach, has written numerous books, including a mystery series about a character named Dora Ellison. He still plays piano, and performs around Long Beach and Nassau County. He plays for seniors at the Nautilus, in Atlantic Beach, and is half of a duo called J-Bird and Dave that performs at local restaurants. He played at the Long Beach Historical Society’s Centennial Gala in October.

He also paints. His artwork varies from portraits and landscapes to paintings of places around Long Beach, including the Magnolia pier and the food trucks on Riverside Boulevard.

“I’m frequently stunned when people like my art. I go, ‘Really? I can paint?’ he said. When I grew up, I was told to stop banging on the piano. A lot of us, back then, our parents wanted us to be lawyers. This is what I’ve got.”

Feldman was born in Brooklyn in 1957, and his family — his parents, Lawrence and Enid, his brother, Matt, and sister, Cynthia — moved to Valley Stream later that year.

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David attended Valley Stream South High School until he was a senior, when his parents decided to send him to the Wooster School in Connecticut for his final year. He remembers having to wear a suit and go to chapel. It was a Catholic school.

Feldman is Jewish.

There were three subjects that he enjoyed: English, history and art. “There was a community art center attached to the school,” he recalled. “They had a figure-drawing class with nude models, which was just terrific for an 18-year-old boy. Along with that, I got my education from reading books and

reading about history.”

Feldman attended Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, after graduating from high school in 1975. He edited the college paper, the Drew Acorn, and played rugby. When he finished college, his mother said he should continue using his skill with words. So he found a proofreading job in New Jersey that “did municipal bonds for the city of Philadelphia, so I had to become a very good proofreader.

“When the first Macintosh came out in 1984, it was a threat, because now people could start doing this stuff from home,” Feldman continued. “So I bought one and started my own company, eFace Media. The ‘e’ is for my wife’s name, Ellen, and ‘Face’ was my nickname in college.”

In 1985, Feldman was invited to a wedding with his rugby friends, and he saw “a beautiful girl and asked her to dance. I asked her if she lived in (New York) city, and she said no, but she would visit if she had a reason,” he recalled of their dance. “It flew right over my head at first. But eventually, I asked her out, and now we’ve been married for 35 years.” They have two sons Michael, 32, and Daniel, 28.

Feldman had moved to Long Beach in 1983, while doing the proofreading job remotely. He would work nights and sleep on the beach during the day, near his old home on Monroe Boulevard.

Life was going well, and then there were hardships.

Growing up, Feldman smoked marijuana and cigarettes. He said he and his friends would go through their families’ medicine cabinets as well, taking Valium, and they used cocaine. But in 1991, he began his journey to sobriety. He has been sober since April 14, 1994.

Life wasn’t done throwing challenges his way, though.

He had been playing piano at a steak and sushi house in Southampton each summer for a few years. Then, all of a sudden, in 2020, he couldn’t play correctly, and he stumbled as if he were drunk, even though he wasn’t. He went to the Hospital for Special Surgery, in Manhattan, and was told he had spinal problems so severe that they could cause paralysis. He had spinal fusion surgery in October 2020, preventing the paralysis.

Days after the surgery, he started vomiting, and went to Long Beach Hospital, where he was told he had air in his intestines and needed surgery. He was immediately loaded into an ambulance and taken to South Nassau hospital, now Mount Sinai South Nassau. After the surgery, he had to wear a colostomy bag for three and a half months.

“Then I needed a hip replacement,” he said, in 2021. “Five days before that surgery, my urologist noticed something, took a biopsy, and revealed I had Level 7 prostate cancer.”

All told, Feldman has had seven surgeries in the past four years, including another for trigger finger, and he is still dealing with lung issues and facing another potential hip replacement.

He has no plans to slow down.