

ISBN pbk: 978-1-7362417-2-1

ISBN e-Book: 978-1-7362417-3-8

Fossil Creek Press, St. Louis, MO

6 x 9, \$14.95 (paperback)

Family & Relationships / Biographical Fiction

<https://carinshulusky.com/>

"Gives readers a chance to see the difficulties many of us faced during the pandemic and to embrace the surprising gifts as well!"

—Jill Kraft Thompson, award-winning author
Finding Jill: How I Rebuilt My Life After Losing the Five People I Loved Most

finding light in a lost year

Carin Fahr Shulusky

Do you remember where you were when you first heard news of the pandemic? *Finding Light in a Lost Year* will take you there. Readers can watch it unfold through the eyes of Roni Wright, a successful travel agent with an architect husband and two lively young children. Month by month the story details the real statistics of the pandemic against the affect on the fictional Wright family. As the reality of the pandemic unfurls, Roni's life also unravels. Jobs, school, and social life are put on hold as the worst pandemic in 100 years takes over. Roni and her family are shaken to the core with trials and tragedies but in the midst of it all, they find hope. You will cheer as they work their way out of darkness into a better place.

"Readers will laugh and cry and want to shake a character or two..."

—Debbie Haupt, blogger, *The Reading Frenzy*

Carin Fahr Shulusky is a former advertising executive and founder of the Marketing Alliance in St. Louis Missouri. This is her second book. She is also the author of *In the Middle*. Carin retired in 2014 to devote more time to writing. Carin lives with her husband, Richard Shulusky. They have two grown children and are the proud grandparents of one terrific granddaughter.





St. Louis Author Carin Fahr Shulusky Releases *Finding Light in a Lost Year*

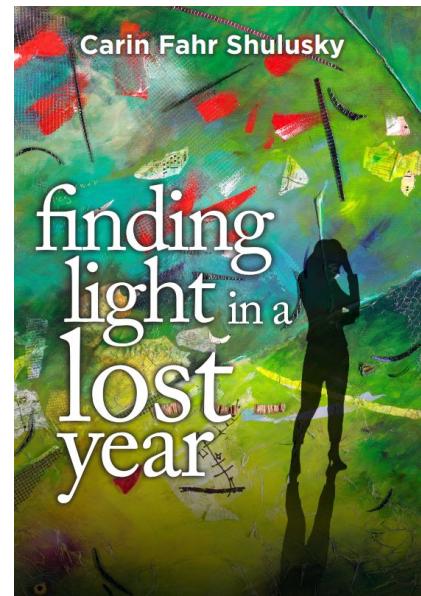
Shulusky's newest novel explores the trials of family life during the pandemic.

St. Louis, MO, April 14, 2022 – PenPower Book Marketing Services and Fossil Creek Press are pleased to announce the upcoming release of lifetime St. Louis resident Carin Fahr Shulusky's new novel, *Finding Light in a Lost Year*, a poignant analysis of the trials faced by American families during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"East coast versus west coast, rural versus city," says Shulusky, "there is often discussion about what divides us. But the pandemic had the opposite effect. It was an experience shared by all. No matter the income or where in the country a person lived, everybody was impacted in similar ways."

Finding Light in a Lost Year follows Roni Wright and the Wright family as their seemingly perfect life is upended by a worldwide pandemic. Set against the backdrop of actual events as they unfolded, the book examines how headlines translated to the struggles faced by everyday people and families.

However, unlike those headlines, by examining the effects on the Wright family, readers can emphasize with the trials, as they had to face them themselves. The story acts like a mirror, shining light onto the dark times that everybody fought through and showing that what seemed like a singular problem was actually a traumatic experience felt by all.



From going store to store in search of toilet paper, to juggling a home schooling schedule while also adjusting to a new and awkward work-from-home environment, the very things that isolated us for safety were the same things that many of us would turn to our community to commiserate about—a commiseration that couldn't happen during the times of social distancing.

“I want people who read this to see that they were not alone in their own lost year,” concludes Shulusky. “As we all did our part and refrained from time spent with family and friends, it led to a sense of isolation. We lost the camaraderie and outlets to discuss the hardships of life, and thus felt that our experiences were unique. But, in fact, many of those struggles were faced by us all, and that’s what I want people to understand when they read my book.”

Finding Light in a Lost Year will be released on May 8, 2022, and is currently available for pre-order through Amazon and Barnes & Noble. It is also available for orders from your independent local bookstores via Indiebound.

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Title: *Finding Light in a Lost Year* by Carin Fahr Shulusky
Category: Family & Relationships / Biographical Fiction
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-7362417-2-1 (\$14.95)
E-Book ISBN: 978-1-7362417-3-8
177 pages / Publication Date: May 8, 2022
Publisher: Fossil Creek Press
Website: www.carinshulusky.com

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Endorsements for *Finding Light in A Lost Year*

One of the few good things to come out of these tough times during the great pandemic of 2020-2022 is a writer willing to be honest about her own experiences and put it on the page in an act of great bravery. Ms. Shulsky has definitely succeeded in her honest and illuminating novel.

—Jonathan Miller
Multi-Award-Winning Mystery Writer
Criminal Defense Lawyer

As we all learn how to adjust our lives during this long, weary pandemic, Carin Fahr Shulsky's newest book, *Finding Light in A Lost Year*, gives readers a sense of encouragement while paying homage to perceived setbacks and big accomplishments that many readers may recognize. This unforgiving pandemic has uprooted all of our lives. As the main character, Roni, narrates the transitions her family endured, readers will learn how Carin's story mirrors so many of our own experiences, challenges, and personal discoveries. *Finding Light in A Lost Year* gives readers a chance to see the difficulties many of us have gone through and to embrace the surprising gifts as well!

—Jill Kraft Thompson
Award-Winning Author of *Finding Jill: How I Rebuilt My Life After Losing the Five People I Loved Most*

Finding Light in A Lost Year takes us on one woman's journey through loss, heartbreak, grief and a discovery of what really matters. A page-turning great read.

—Rebecca Now
Founder, Voices of American Herstory

The proverb says, "The same water that hardens the egg, softens the potato." Difficulties of life test the character of a person, a family, and our relationships. In *Finding Light in A Lost Year*, Carin uses the Covid pandemic to tell a universal story of struggle and survival. No one escapes hardships in life, but as Carin effectively demonstrates, hardships teach lessons that can be learned no other way. Some grow stronger, some succumb, but no one is left unchanged. Like a chick grows stronger breaking free of its shell, Carin demonstrates that families who break free of life's challenges grow stronger, deeper, and richer relationships through perseverance and faith.

—Stephen Hower, Host
The Hower Hour, Real Talk Radio Network
Author, *Man in the Middle, Sharpening the Sword, Contrary to Popular Belief* and *The Serenity Principles*

Carin Shulsky's latest endeavor, *Finding Light in A Lost Year*, is an absolute gem, a faith based mix of fact and fiction, a cautionary tale about the seemingly perfect upwardly mobile Wright family told in the first person in chronicle form through the point of view of Roni, the family's matriarch.

Readers will laugh and cry and want to shake a character or two as this family traverses a global pandemic, career obstacles, personal tragedies and triumphs. A real stand out in this novel is the realistic perspective of just how difficult it has been to navigate the pandemic for families with children – from no school to virtual learning – and finally back in the classroom, plus the plethora of good and bad newsworthy things that happened in the states and around the world during 2020 and 2021.

With an even paced and easy to understand dialogue, and an interesting cast of characters dealing with real life conflicts, this little treasure will appeal to a range of readers, including fans of women's fiction and inspirational fiction.

Roni Wright had it all: a globe-trotting successful executive for a travel company, married to her handsome architect husband Nathan, a young daughter, Kaitlin, and her young son Oliver. Then, a global pandemic struck and suddenly both children had no school to go to, Nathan's office closed but he now has more work than ever, which leaves him floundering about where in this abruptly noisy house to set up shop. And, lastly, there's no more travel so no more travel industry, leaving Roni, a fish out of water, in charge of everything at home but feeling incapable of handling anything at all. But that's just the tip of the iceberg when some well-kept secrets come to light, threatening the very foundation of this suddenly very imperfect family.

—Debbie Haupt, Blogger
The Reading Frenzy

A riveting, *true to life* look into one family's journey through the pandemic. The glimmer of hope they held onto was able to shine through as they reworked their lives and strengthened their family bonds.

—Susan Briere, Library Media Specialist
Dudley, MA

Finding Light in A Lost Year is a succinct and colorful story that readers can relate to because the complexities of life during a pandemic affected all of us in some similar ways. Shulsky does a beautiful job while telling an interesting fictional story weaving the good news of what is most important in life. The prayer offered at the end sums up the lessons of this tale perfectly. This will be a valuable book in future years as we try to describe to younger generations what the years of the pandemic were like here in America. More importantly, it will show that God cares deeply about each one of us and will use whatever He has (even a pandemic) to bring His beloved children closer to Him.

—Susan Bentzinger
CrossWalk Bookstore

A truly inspiring story about finding oneself in the face of adversity. I loved that it outlined life both before and during the pandemic, and demonstrated the importance of leaning on family and God for support and encouragement—even in the face of unspeakable tragedy.

—Kristen Schreiber, MMS, PA-C



Why I Wrote This Book

Much will be discussed about the Covid-19 pandemic in the years and decades to come—it is a once-in-a-lifetime event, after all. However, as current news already suggests, these conversations will largely focus on the macro effects. What were the impacts to the economy? On politics? How did it reshape the demographics of the United States as people moved out of cities and into home offices?

What's lost in the coverage of empty shelves is what it actually felt like to face them—the struggle of going store to store in hopes of finding one with necessities like toilet paper, paper towels, milk, noodles; the frustration that accompanies the uncertainty as to whether basic needs can continue to be met.

My aim with this book is to bring those macro discussions to the micro level. By focusing on the fictional Wright family, I hope to put a face to the struggles that so many Americans endured, and continue to endure, so that future generations will be able to understand both the widespread impacts, and those on a more personal level.

I also hope that readers will see a bit of themselves and their own struggles in this book and recognize that their pain in the lost year was not theirs alone. All families with children were forced to juggle the burdens of home-schooling while also finding time to manage their own work and careers. Virtually everybody was forced to cancel or postpone vacations, stay away from vulnerable family members, friends and colleagues, and give up aspects of daily life in the aim of protecting as much of the population as possible.

Finally, I hope that one message readers absorb from this book is the importance of faith and family in difficult times.

Finding Light in a Lost Year will be released on May 8, 2022, and is currently available for pre-order through Amazon and Barnes & Noble. It is also available for orders from your independent local bookstores via Indiebound.



Biography of Carin Fahr Shulusky

Carin Fahr Shulusky was born and raised in west St. Louis County, Missouri, and was always interested in writing. She won a poetry competition in 8th grade and was editor of her high school newspaper. She attended the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she received a Bachelor of Journalism in 1973. After college, she went on to be the first professional woman in the advertising departments of several major corporations.

After a 25-year career in marketing, Carin created her own firm, Marketing Alliance. She was president of Marketing Alliance from 2002 – 2014. She is a past-president of the Business Marketing Association of St. Louis and has received their Lifetime Achievement Award. She was a member of the National Association of Press Women. Carin currently serves on the board of the Special Education Foundation. She is a volunteer for Springboard to Learning as a coach in their WiseWrite program.

Carin retired in 2014 to devote more time to writing. Her first book, *In the Middle*, was inspired by her own battle to care for her beloved mother, Dorothy Hoehne Fahr. Many of the stories Carrie Young's mother tells her in the book came directly from Carin's own mother.

Carin lives with her husband, Richard Shulusky. They have two grown children and are proud grandparents to one granddaughter. Carin is a lifelong member of Pathfinder Church in Ellisville, Missouri. She has served for over thirty years in their Children's Ministry.





Q&As

Finding Light in A Lost Year by Carin Fahr Shulusky

1. *Finding Light in a Lost Year* covers only the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic and ends before the Delta and Omicron waves. Are you concerned that there was more to the Wrights' story that wasn't covered?

ANSWER: Of course there is, but I had to find somewhere to end it. I often think, "Oh, I should add this new Covid experience." Even today, I know people who have contracted a new variant. There are many more stories of this pandemic. But on July 4, 2021, I think we all felt some level of relief. Like a nationwide exhale – the worst is past, let's move on to what's next. I was careful not to say it was over. It may never be over, but we are moving on.

2. Of all the industries impacted by the pandemic, why did you choose the travel and architecture industries to focus on with Roni and Nathan?

ANSWER: I felt the travel industry was perhaps most dramatically impacted by the pandemic. My son-in-law is an engineer, and I saw firsthand how it impacted their family when his office shut down. I didn't want to use his exact example, but I thought an architect would be able to work from home like an engineer. I always try to write about what I know when I can.

3. Were there aspects of pandemic life that you felt did not fit into the Wrights' story and therefore didn't get the attention you thought might have been deserved?

ANSWER: Yes. I did try and put in as many pandemic experiences as I observed, but I still think I could have added others. For example, I used my granddaughter's school experience for the Wright children's virtual school, but I had their cousins attend a parochial school, like the school at my church. Every child had a different experience. I think I represented two extremes. People can remember what their own experience was as they read. It is my hope that readers will remember their own experiences as they read this book.

4. While you mention the distrust of vaccines at the end of the book, all of your characters are happy to receive theirs. Are you concerned about backlash from readers who fall into the anti-vaccine camp?

ANSWER: One of my early reader's falls into that camp and she didn't object. I thought that was possibly a good sign. I suppose there are things in the book that certain groups may object to. I can only offer that these are the opinions of my fictional family. Many agree. Many may disagree. I hope it opens a dialogue.

5. Do you expect to continue the Wright family's story as fallout from the pandemic continues, including additional waves, the supply chain crunch, and the reshuffling of the workforce?

ANSWER: Every time I look for something that's not available or hear about some shortage, I think I should write a blog or short story on how the Wrights handled that problem. But just now I am focused on my next book, so I don't think I will. That could, of course, change.

6. What is your writing process? Do you have a certain schedule you observe or follow ... such as getting up early in the morning to do some uninterrupted writing?

ANSWER: I don't really have any set schedule. Sometimes I write all day and sometimes just morning or afternoon. I write when I'm moved and when it fits into my schedule.

7. What advice would you offer an up and coming writer? What was the best writing advice ever given to you?

ANSWER: I once read that Louisa May Alcott said someone told her "write what you know – from your own experiences." I was never successful until I stopped writing what I thought people wanted to read and started writing what I wanted to say, from my heart.

8. Who are some of your favorite authors/writers, and why?

ANSWER: The author who made me love reading was Jane Austin. I love everything she did and some that just copy her. I also enjoy Harry Potter novels. My most joyous reading experience was a new Harry Potter book. I'm also a fan of Elizabeth Peters and her Amelia Peabody series. I love her sense of sarcastic humor.

9. What are you reading now?

ANSWER: The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post by Allison Pataki. It's fascinating and made me want to eat Grape Nuts cereal.

10. Where can I buy your book?

ANSWER: Amazon, Barnes and Noble and wherever books are sold. Small independent bookstores can also order it via IndieBound.