

Post-Graduate

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

Mrs. Robinson is back. Charles Webb has finally written the sequel to his classic best seller "The Graduate," which gave birth to the iconic 1967 Mike Nichols' movie starring Dustin Hoffman as young Benjamin Braddock and Anne Bancroft as everyone's favorite cougar, Mrs. Robinson.

It's only taken him 40 some years to come forth with "Home School."

"A lot of the pressure was external," says Webb about the never-ending question of when a sequel to "The Graduate" was coming. "People would always ask, 'What happened? What happened?' Well, how would I know?"

Webb went on to write eight more novels after "The Graduate," which also enjoyed a run on Broadway with Kathleen Turner famously baring all. But his colorful, personal life soon overshadowed his work.

He home-schooled his two sons when the practice was controversial and, in California, where the Webbs lived, illegal. The opposition sent the family on the run. At one point Webb managed a nudist camp. Then for a time the family lived in a van before decamping to England.

Now Webb and his wife of 43 years, Fred, an artist whose given name is Eve, are in a retirement home relying on public welfare as Fred recovers from a breakdown and exhibiting two distinct personalities, accord-

ing to Webb.

As for the sequel, the characters all came back easily as soon as the 68-year-old writer made one simple choice: to start smoking again.

"I finally settled down to do it and unfortunately it had the side effect of smoking, which I did when I wrote the original," says Webb. "To get back into the voice, for some reason that drug was needed to trigger something in my brain. That was the price I had to pay."

"Home School" takes place in the '70s, with Benjamin and Elaine fighting the authorities in Westchester County for the

right to teach their children at home. Benjamin becomes

HOME SCHOOL
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so desperate he reaches out to the one person they've moved across county to avoid — the boys' grandmother, Mrs. Robinson.

With the book's tone of finality it seems Webb has put to rest, once and for all, the "What happened?" question.

"I hope so," he says.

On the other hand, Mrs. Robinson comes off as such a dynamo it's hard to believe that



Benjamin and Elaine, nevermind readers, have heard the last of her. "Don't say that," sighs Webb good-naturedly. "Maybe and maybe not. But it seems final." ♦

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