

Appalachian Daughter

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"Appalachian Daughter grabbed me Friday afternoon, and except for the time for sleeping and necessary duties, did not turn me loose until I finished it Saturday afternoon." Early Reader This coming-of-age novel depicts the trials, triumphs, and tragedies that befall Maggie Martin, the eldest of eight children whose family struggles to make ends meet on a hilly farm in Campbell Hollow, a narrow mountain valley in East Tennessee. On the last day of eighth grade, Maggie begins to dream of finding a way to escape the drudgery and confinement of life in the hollow and establish her independence. Her plan begins to fall in place when she enters high school and discovers she has a natural talent for excelling in shorthand, typing and other business classes. Meanwhile she spares no effort in helping her family continue to survive despite their poverty, a less than fertile few acres, and a family history of instability. She strives to fit in at high school in spite of the harsh limits placed on her by her hot-tempered, authoritarian mother, Corie Mae. She often turns for support to her easy-going father Ray, who sometimes intervenes to overrule Corie Mae's restrictions. As she goes about her life, doing her school work and helping out at home, she interacts with interesting, unforgettable, and sometimes dangerous characters, including a mentally challenged neighbor, an escaped convict, and a lecherous employer. She is forced to make decisions and take actions that would be difficult for a much older adult. Maggie meets each challenge with determination, imagination, and courage whether it's cutting a pitchfork from a mare's tail or helping to deliver her baby sister. The typical spoken language, folkways, and traditional beliefs and religious practices are skillfully woven into this portrait of Appalachian family life. The author's sympathetic insights into mountain culture combined with memorably etched characters and events create a realistic reflection of Tennessee mountain life during the decade following WWII. Maggie's life takes an unexpected turn when her cousin JD reveals a dark secret that could shatter the family. Maggie struggles to maintain her dreams of a better life amidst the many trials that will test the grit of this Appalachian Daughter. "I absolutely loved the story! I really think that the thoughtful approach to the main character's life situations will be meaningful to girls and boys who read the book." Early Reader

Mary Jane Salyers Biography I grew up in a rural county in East Tennessee during the 1940s and 1950s. My family had fifteen acres, a third of which was not tillable, and cows for milk and butter, and raised chickens, hogs, rabbits, and goats. A big garden provided food to eat and preserve. Without Financial Aid and Community Colleges, many of my friends could not afford higher education, but expected to find a job after high school, get married, or join the military. My parents, both high school teachers, managed to send four of their five children to college, and three became teachers. In seventh grade the teacher asked what we wanted to do when we grew up. I decided then that I would teach during the school year and write novels in the summer. Writing was more a whim than a real plan, and I didn't do much about it for many years. I attended Carson-Newman College where I met Bill Salyers, and we were married after I finished my degree. I majored in English with a minor in history, and earned a secondary teaching license. During the next 40 years, I taught in four states and one foreign country in both secondary schools and colleges. My father, a high school teacher and coach, was also a Baptist pastor. My mother was an ideal pastor's wife, and I followed her example and married a preacher boy. Bill served as pastor of several churches in Indiana and as chaplain at a large state institution for the mentally disabled. That institutional experience helped make me more aware and sensitive to persons with intellectual difficulties. During those busy years, I continued to teach.

earned a masters degree from Indiana University, and gave birth to three daughters, who have all grown up to be powerful women and have provided us with four grandchildren and two great-grandsons. In 2011 we moved to Hillsborough, NC. As I approached retirement, I again began to dream about writing a novel. I remembered all the rich stories, language, events of my years as a Tennessee mountain girl. At a fiction writing course at the University of Chicago I wrote one of the chapters that appear in Appalachian Daughter. After retirement I attended several writing workshops: Green Lake Writer's Conference, Appalachian Writers Workshop, and Antioch Writers' Workshop and continued to write. Encouraging feedback from dozens of friends and family who read the draft, finally convinced me that "Appalachian Daughter" was ready to publish.

Other Books

Desperate. Set in Appalachian coal country, this "superb" (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) legal drama follows one determined lawyer as he faces a coal industry giant in a seven-year battle over clean drinking water for a West Virginia community. For two decades, the water in the taps and wells of Mingo County didn't look, smell, or taste right. Could the water be the root of the health problems—from kidney stones to cancer—in this Appalachian community? Environmental lawyer Kevin Thompson certainly thought so. For seven years, Thompson waged an epic legal battle against Massey Energy, West Virginia's most powerful coal company, helmed by CEO Don Blankenship. While Massey's lawyers worked out of a gray glass office tower in Charleston known as "the Death Star," Thompson set up shop in a ramshackle hotel in the fading coal town of Williamson. Working with fellow lawyers and a crew of young activists, Thompson would eventually uncover the ruthless shortcuts that put the community's drinking water at risk. Retired coal miners, women whose families had lived in the area's coal camps for generations, a respected preacher and his brother, all put their trust in Thompson when they had nowhere else to turn. Desperate is a masterful work of investigative reporting about greed and denial, "both a case study in exploitation of the little guy and a playbook for confronting it" (Kirkus Reviews). Maher crafts a revealing portrait of a town besieged by hardship and heartbreak, and an inspiring account of one tenacious environmental lawyer's mission to expose the truth and demand justice.

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