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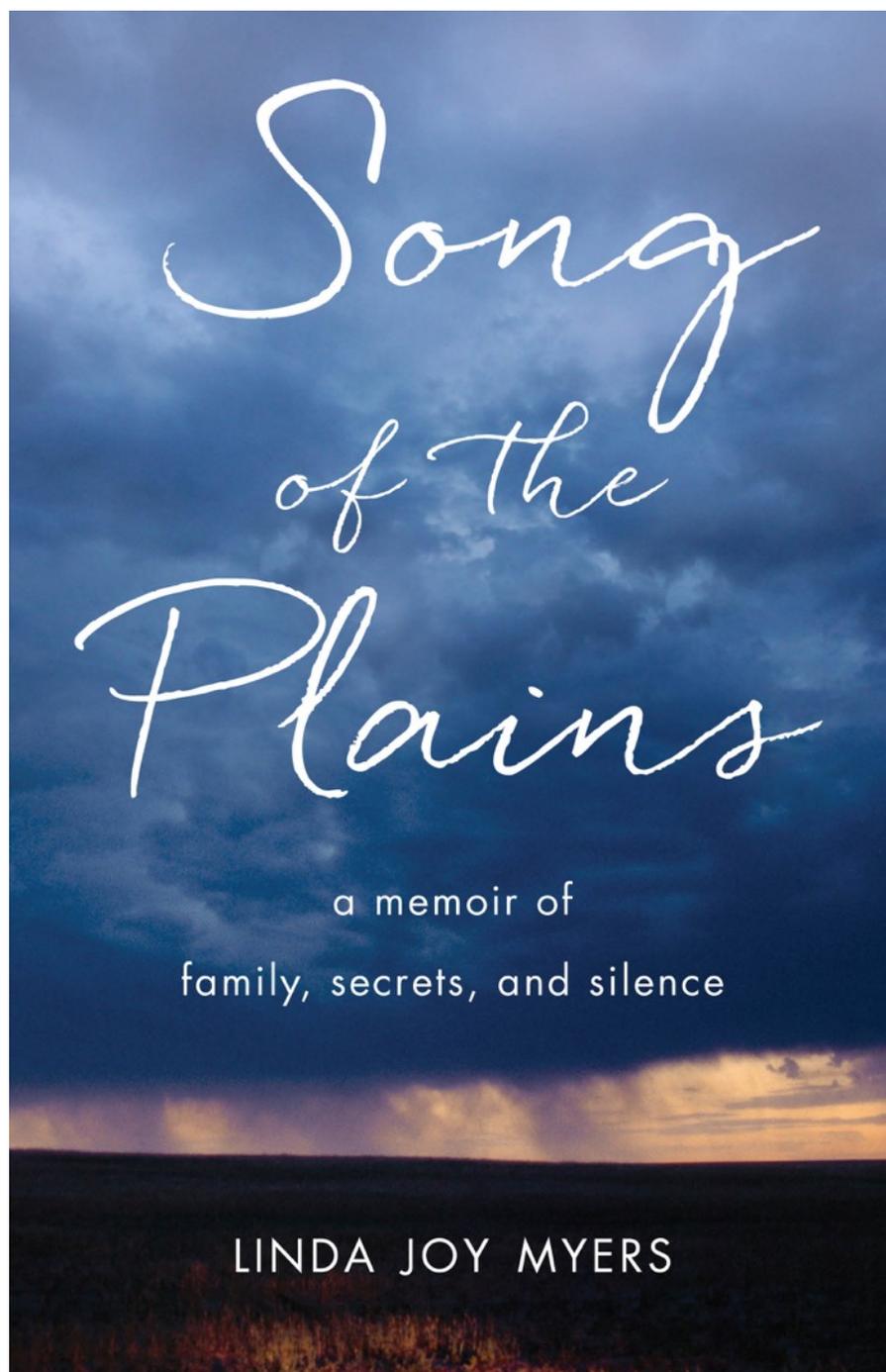
*Song of the Plains: A Memoir of Family, Secrets, and Silence*

by Linda Joy Myers

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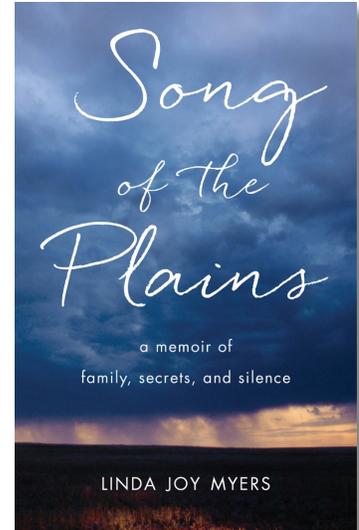
Contact: Eva Zimmerman Public Relations | [EvaZimmermanPR@gmail.com](mailto:EvaZimmermanPR@gmail.com)



**How do you disentangle yourself from generations of loss, abuse, and neglect?  
*Song of the Plains* details Linda Joy Myers' dogged research into her family history—  
 a journey that ultimately allowed her to break the chain of abandonment and abuse**

Ever since she was a child, Linda Joy Myers felt the power of the past. As the third daughter in her family to be abandoned or estranged by a mother, she carried the traumas in her own body and was obsessed with the need to find out what happened to the mothers in her family. Thanks to the stories her great-grandmother told her in a featherbed in Iowa, Myers received a gift that proved crucial in her life: the idea that everyone is a walking storybook, and if you listen carefully, you can find the clues to understand the past.

***Song of the Plains: A Memoir of Family, Secrets, and Silence*** (She Writes Press | June 20th, 2017 | \$16.95) is a weaving of family history that starts in the Oklahoma plains and spans seven generations. Myers combs through dusty archives, family gossip, and genealogy websites to uncover the stories that reveal the secrets of her family's past—when and why the mothers abandoned their daughters, the harshness of life on the Plains, and the dreams of escape. Her poetic elegy to the power of nature and history shows how you can change your family story from inheriting patterns from the past to create a legacy of forgiveness, healing, and love.



As a memoirist and memoir teacher, Myers believes we all carry the imprint of the generations that come before us; if we excavate our hidden truths, we can unlock a deeper understanding about the past, and create a more positive heritage for our descendants. The memoir takes you on a journey from a childhood of abandonment to an adult perspective that finds compassion for the mothers in her family as she walks in their shoes through the early twentieth century.

**About Linda Joy Myers:**



Linda Joy Myers is president and founder of the National Association of Memoir Writers. Her memoir *Don't Call Me Mother—A Daughter's Journey from Abandonment to Forgiveness* was a finalist in the ForeWord Book of the Year Award, a finalist in the IndieExcellence Awards, the winner of the BAIPA Gold Medal award. She's the author of three books on memoir writing: *The Power of Memoir—How to Write Your Healing Story*, *Journey of Memoir*, and *Becoming Whole*.

She's a coauthor with Brooke Warner of two books: *Breaking Ground on Your Memoir* and *Magic of Memoir*. Myers writes for *The Huffington Post* and co-teaches the program Write Your Memoir in Six Months with Brooke Warner. A therapist for thirty-six years, Myers also speaks about memoir, healing, and the power of writing the truth.

Learn more: <http://memoriesandmemoirs.com>. Connect with Linda Joy Myers: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#).

## Advance Praise for *Song of the Plains*

“Linda Joy Myers, an established thought leader in the memoir genre, solidifies her legacy with this meditation on ancestry, place, generational pain, healing and redemption... The writing is cohesive and evocative, the research impeccable and the ultimate triumph over both nature and nurture compelling.”—**Kathleen Adams** LPC, Director, Center for Journal Therapy, Inc., author, *Journal to the Self* and editor, *Expressive Writing: Foundations of Practice*

“Linda Joy Myers’ search for continuity in her family history brings to mind E. M. Forster’s quote, ‘Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted....’ Myers’ search for connection deeply resonates in a time when social media makes connections that are broad, but shallow... Myers’ writing plumbs the depths of real experience. This important narrative is crafted to last.”—**Sue William Silverman**, author, *The Pat Boone Fan Club: My Life as a White Anglo-Saxon Jew*

Intelligent, heartfelt, and tenderly observed, *Song of the Plains* is a memoir about identity, storytelling, and the healing power of telling the truth... As Myers writes, ‘If we hide or don’t tell our stories, part of who we are goes missing.’ If you’ve ever puzzled over your own missing pieces, or questioned who you might be without your own secrets, this beautiful book will help light your way.”—**Mark Matousek**, author of *Sex Death Enlightenment* and *The Boy He Left Behind*

"*Song of the Plains* is an emotional and captivating read. From the very first page, Linda Myers leads the reader on a journey into the inner landscape of a complex family dynamic that invites curiosity and empathy. Myers is a brilliant storyteller... This story touches readers in a way that stirs compassion for the complexity of people and their role in a larger framework known as ‘family.’"  
—**Tina M. Games**, author of *Journaling by the Moonlight: A Mother's Path to Self Discovery* and Certified Creativity and Life Purpose Coach.

“The descriptions in *Song of the Plains* are downright elegiac. I felt I was standing on the red earth in Oklahoma, feeling the wind in my face. This next volume of Myers’ quest for understanding and forgiveness of her foremothers and family will inspire anyone seeking to understand their roots.”—**Sharon Lippincott**, author of *The Heart and Craft of Lifestory Writing*

“We all have stories that change our lives. Sometimes we remain silent, but the silence only gives the story more power. In *Song of the Plains*, memoir expert Linda Joy Myers goes deeply into her own life story and reveals how she transformed it into a new one that helped her move forward with hope and love... This book is a must read for anyone who wants to explore—and heal—the past.” —**Nina Amir**, bestselling author of *Creative Visualization for Writers*, *The Author Training Manual*, and *How to Blog a Book*

“For years, as I considered the mystery of my childhood I wondered ‘Who were these people who molded me?’ Linda Joy Myers’ memoir *Song of the Plains* asks that question and explores the decades-long saga of her search for answers. Like an ancestral detective, she peers into the evidence and follows historical bread crumbs, attempting to make sense of her family’s earlier lives.”  
—**Jerry Waxler**, author of *The Memoir Revolution*

“*Song of the Plains* is a poetic work of art that deftly weaves an intergenerational tapestry of the author’s ultimate healing and self-redemption... Linda Joy Myers’ elegantly crafted memoir gives hope to readers yearning to break the legacy of childhood trauma and it inspires us to undertake necessary work to accept ourselves, own our worthiness, and take our rightful place in the world.”—**Donna Stoneham**, PhD, author, *The Thriver's Edge: Seven Keys to Transform the Way You Live, Love, and Lead*

“Linda Joy Myers is a warrior -- a soldier with a pen who fights her way through a painful family history to an unexpected place of profound understanding and gratitude. This beautiful memoir is for anyone who wants to cull deep meaning from their past and find peace and healing on the other side.”—**Rev. Susan Sparks**, author, *Laugh Your Way to Grace: Reclaiming the Spiritual Power of Humor*

“Beautiful and lyrical, this memoir is achingly honest. We see the narrator, a strong woman who not only survived her early life—abandonment, rageful attacks, and betrayals—offering us the story of her struggle and ultimate redemption. Through writing her story she shows us a way to find our own, modeling the kind of bravery and grit it takes for us to embark on our own journey.”—**Judy Reeves**, Author of *Wild Women, Wild Voices* and *A Writer's Book of Days*

“Myers, a skillful and poetic storyteller, recalls scenes from a childhood spent in the long shadows of her mother and grandmother. We follow her shero’s journey as she attempts to disentangle her spirit from the legacies of the past and finds the lost stories that are the key to freedom.”—**Hollye Dexter**, Author of *The Fire Season*

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### **An Excerpt from *Song of the Plains: A Memoir of Family, Secrets, and Silence* By Linda Joy Myers**

*The Great Plains is a wonder of contrasts.  
The deep-indigo night sky is splashed by a wash of stars scattered across the dome above your  
small self.  
In the white brilliance of daylight, it echoes with lonely notes from meadowlarks and red-winged  
blackbirds resting on stark tree branches and fence posts, dangerous barbed wire trembling in the  
wind.  
The sounds of the birds and the sense of space, so large you can't grasp them with your two-  
dimensional mind, etch the edges of your loneliness, giving it form, making your heart reach out  
for the simplicity of light and wind, red dirt and birdcall.  
In this moment you are at one with All That Is. You are free.*

#### **Chapter 1 Beauty**

It’s more than eyes and hair, the curve of a cheek, the shape of a lip, a smile, a happy temperament. We inherit many things in our genes, but here’s a question: How much is nature, versus nurture? Science tells us that our cells are marked by what has happened in the past long before we became embodied, and that we carry fragments of our history from ancestors whose names we don’t know. Yet we come into the world with our own story set in the stars, our own fingerprints and personality, our own magic and shine.

As we make our way through life on this planet, we question who we are and where we came from. Hints whisper to us in the darkness—ghosts of our history, the sense of what’s hidden, secrets. I have always wondered, if we search for the secrets and hidden history, can we recover lost years and lost people? Can we repair the lost connections and create new relationships? Is it crazy to try? How do we weave together what was broken?

I suppose you could say I’m obsessed with trying to fit together all the pieces of my fragmented family. I always wanted to know more about them, about the history that kept entering my childhood like a wave that kept rolling toward us. I could feel its unstoppable force.

I was lucky—my curiosity about history was seeded by the stories my great-grandmother Blanche told me as we lay together in her featherbed in Iowa when I was eight years old. As I listened to her tell me about my grandmother as a little girl and my mother as a baby, I’d close my eyes and imagine them small, like I was.

What I learned as I gathered up the threads of our stories is that everyone has a point of view, a particular lens through which they see the world. My grandmother had her version, and Blanche had another. I always yearned for my mother to tell me her story, but instead she acted it out—sometimes screamed it out—and in the end, I was left with fragments about her life. There was so much more I didn't know. I had to find out what happened to my mother when she was a little girl who had been left behind by her mother, just like I was. What were the stories she couldn't remember or tell?

Our story is about my search to understand what happened to my mother and her mother, and the legacy of the generations that came before us. I wanted to understand the ways in which we were all marked by loss, the way the wind in the Great Plains bends the trees and lifts the earth in shapes that change the landscape forever.

\* \* \*

Until the recent advent of Ancestry.com and other online resources, you had to learn your history through “direct research.” Your fingers rifle through gritty index cards filed in the dusty archive boxes lining spider-webbed shelves in the backs of libraries and courthouses. You lift up huge leather-bound books from the shelves and flip through hundreds of pages of births and deaths and marriage records, translating calligraphic handwriting in black ink, each name shaped like a poem, each name someone who lived and died and was memorialized in these records.

The books I found in the courthouses in Iowa were stacked to the ceiling, draped with inches of dust, the thick books holding clues to people long forgotten. I wondered if anyone alive had ever heard of the names I saw in them.

Another place to find your kin is in a cemetery. The aroma of fresh grass greets your nostrils, and birds sing on nearby trees. In this bucolic setting, you tramp between the rows of headstones. You see names carved in old stones that are almost unreadable, names lost to the ravages of weather and time. Angels lean inexorably toward the earth, where the ancient loam will absorb the stones.

Looking for people with whom you share DNA is a physical experience of sweat and dust and frustration. But when you find them and brush the powdered leaves off the dimly chiseled names, you notice the severe framing of the person's life: date of birth to date of death. You can't help but wonder about your own future stone, how the austere dates of your beginning and ending will one day be marked under your name, and how in, say, one hundred years, no one will remember you. No one will know who you were—unless you leave a story behind. And even then, the trails of your existence will gradually disappear into mist.

Perhaps the current DNA testing, genealogical research, and family stories and memoirs are a popular way to link ourselves to what may seem to be invisible threads, to the long arc of time. For as long as I can remember, I have been obsessed with learning about people I've never met, especially direct links to my mother's kin. I had a living father whom I hardly saw, and I lived in a world of women. The family that I could claim and that, for a time, claimed me was my mother's side. It is their tale I seek.

\* \* \*

I have now found what I can through my genealogical research, which leaves me with even more questions, but I'm content with having many dates and facts from our family story. I want to share these with my daughter, but when we gather during the holidays, we are in the Present. In moments of quiet, during our celebrating and opening stockings and presents, I find myself thinking about the long-ago stories I've uncovered, the heritage that is ours. As I look around the room, our DNA legacy is evident in the faces of my daughter and grandchildren—the impressions of five generations, that harks back over 120 years. Such moments reveal the most obvious gifts from the past, in bone and blood and flesh.

Several times a year, I visit my daughter, Amanda, her husband, Frank, and their two children, Miles and Zoe, in San Diego. It is in them that I notice the hints of what Louis, my grandmother's father, left us. He died at twenty-one in 1894, two months after his wedding to Blanche, my great-grandmother, most likely unaware he had fathered a daughter. I think of him as the boy who offered us his beauty before he died.

He gifted my grandmother her good looks, looks passed on to my mother and me, mixed with other DNA. Again, I see him in the curve of cheeks, the lips and eyes, of my daughter and her children.

My daughter gave my granddaughter, Zoe Joy, my middle name. She's lanky as a colt, with long blond hair and a no-nonsense approach to life I wish I'd had when I was her age. And I love how she loves to read—I like to think it's a passion that runs through the generations. My grandson Miles takes after his father, with his Italian looks and bent for art and creativity. My daughter's dark eyes and face remind me of my mother in a heart-tugging way that honors the heritage of genetics. My daughter grasps my hand and puts it by hers, saying how much they look alike.

Her hands remind me of my mother's and grandmother's: slim hands that are strong, hands that work and soothe, hands that echo the women she never knew but who are deeply embedded in my psyche and our history. As I hold her hand, I'm reminded of how much I loved my mother's hands, too. It's been twenty years since she died and that part of our story ended. It was a rocky ending to a struggle to be loved, to try to understand her. We were both abandoned daughters, both partially raised by her mother, my grandmother, which left many holes in our family story. By now the stings of the past have smoothed into "that's what happened then; that's only part of my story." I'm aware how much the past has formed and shaped me. There were so many pieces that were missing, too many unanswered questions about why and when the fractures in our family happened. But my search has offered new ground to stand on, a deeper understanding than I had when I was young.

Aware of my fragmented past, my daughter understands the importance of family for me. By now, we've worked out some of the rough periods our relationship endured. When she was a teen, there were times of disconnect and discord, but when she entered her twenties, we experienced a gradual walking toward each other. A deeper healing came when she married Frank; this was a time when past issues with my ex-husband, her father, were put to rest.

What a difference it makes to forgive and let go. You're free to enjoy life and even laugh at your old self, tenderly and with compassion. I wish the family I grew up with had been able to find that kind of resolution. Amanda and I sit together, watching her children play. They are innocent of the darker history my daughter and I know about. We know that we've created a new pattern for her children. We're the first mother-and-daughter friends in four generations, passing on the gift of love and a new story for those who will come after us.

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#### **About She Writes Press:**

She Writes Press is an independent publishing company founded to serve members of [SheWrites.com](http://SheWrites.com), the largest global community of women writers online, and women writers everywhere. A curated press that's both mission-driven and community-oriented, She Writes Press aims to serve writers who wish to maintain greater ownership and control of their projects while still adhering the highest editorial and production standards.

**Publicity Contact:**  
**Eva Zimmerman Public Relations**  
[www.EvaZimmermanPR.com](http://www.EvaZimmermanPR.com)  
[EvaZimmermanPR@gmail.com](mailto:EvaZimmermanPR@gmail.com)  
510-292-8678