

book clubs

Unabashedly Bookish

[Register](#) · [Sign In](#) · [Help](#)

Browse Book Clubs : B&N Blogs : Unabashedly Bookish : The Daughter and The Kids, Two Friends Talk About ...

Choose a Discussion ...

Thread Options

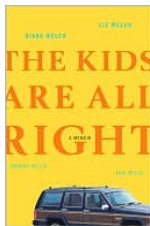
Search

[Advanced](#) [Users](#)**The Daughter and The Kids, Two Friends Talk About Family Memoirs**by [BLOGGER Jill_Dearman](#) on 09-16-2009 09:14 AM - last edited on 09-16-2009 09:31 AM by [ADMIN PaulH](#)

Laurie recently celebrated the publication of *The Impostor's Daughter*, a graphic memoir, while Liz's book *The Kids Are All Right*, co-written with her three siblings, comes out next month. Although publishing can be a competitive business, these two pals have served as each other's greatest cheerleaders. Sometimes it takes a village; but one special writing buddy sure can help. Below, my Writer to Writer interview with Laurie and Liz.

JD: How long have you been friends and how did you meet?

LW: I met Laurie through our dear and mutual friend, Genevieve Field, a fellow writer and, at the time, an editor at Glamour Magazine. Genevieve and I were working on a story for Glamour about success--what does it mean to women these days?--and thought it was be an interesting potential book idea. So we decided to have these "get togethers" where we'd invite friends who we thought we successful to join in a wine fueled discussion of what the term meant in this day and age. We saw it as the beginning of something--and it was! We only had one meeting--the idea was clearly not a success--BUT I did meet Laurie, who was also a writer at Glamour and who was already thinking about writing a memoir.



LS: Is that the first time we met? I thought we met at a baby shower at Genevieve's. Of course, you do describe that success meeting as "wine fueled" and I no longer drink. So you're probably right. Anyway, I instantly clicked with Liz; for starters, we had a lot of friends in common. We wrote for many of the same magazines. And we seemed to have a similar worldview. I think we've

known each other for three years now. We'll know each other for a lot longer.

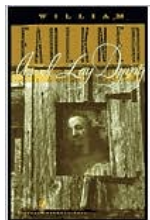
JD: What have you learned from each other as writers?

LW: Laurie and I write different stories for the same magazines. In that world, she's known for her brilliant personal essays and celebrity stories. I am known for investigative journalism and more somber stories (I have been writing about domestic violence and other violence against women for more than a decade) Laurie's gift is she can make even the most polished and professionally sealed people--from J Lo to Jessica Simpson--open up, feel comfortable and say meaningful things. And I think that is in part because she is so willing to delve deep into her own personal life and share it with the world. Her essays -- about her addiction to Ambien for instance which she wrote for Glamour--have startled me in their honesty. She cuts to the chase and does so with a very specific style. She's funny and smart in real life and that translates directly into her writing, which is in and of itself a gift.

LS: I've learned a lot from Liz. One of the first things she taught me is that you can write a brilliant profile without ruining a person's life. She's incredibly ethical--not only when it comes to her dedication to a story and the magazine she's writing for, but about her subjects, as well. Her stories often cover terribly sensitive ground--women who've been abused, or who have suffered hardship or loss--and Liz is always aware of her subjects' humanity, and makes sure they maintain their dignity. She puts people first--but it never affects the quality of her story. That's something I've tried to do as well--even in my celebrity interviews--and it comes directly from the School of Liz.

JD: I hope the school is accepting new students! So, when and how did you decide to write your memoir?

LW: I think Laurie and I are both writers because our personal stories pushed us to investigate our own lives, which makes us interested in how other people live their lives as well. I decided to write a memoir when I was 21 and a student at Edinburgh University. I read



As I Lay Dying and had an epiphany. The book is about the death of Addie Bundren--her family is taking her body (in a coffin on a horse drawn wagon) to her family's burial plot in rural Mississippi. It is told in several different voices--including that of Addie's husband, and her son Vardamon. As I read Faulkner's novel, that Diana was like Vardamon. It took me another 15 years of repeated attempts to write the book myself during which time I interviewed all three of my siblings, requested all my mom's medical records, spoke to friends and neighbors and several colleagues of my mothers (she was a soap opera actress) By 2006, I was getting exasperated. By that time Diana was 28 and an up-and-coming journalist herself. I asked her to read a chapter I had written about our Dad's funeral and as soon as she did, she called me to say, "this is wild--I remember that day so differently. I'm sending you my version." We wrote back and forth for several months and then decided to write the book together, and to include our two other siblings' stories as well.

LS: Mine was a similarly rocky and long road. I grew up in a house where I never knew what my dad really did for a living--the family joke was that he was in the CIA. He used to disappear for months at a time; he spoke eight

About Unabashedly Bookish

Unabashedly Bookish features new articles every day from the Book Clubs staff, guest authors, and friends on hot topics in the world of books, language, writing, and publishing. From trends in the publishing business to updates on genre fiction fan communities, from fun lessons on grammar to reflections on literature in our personal lives, this blog is the best source for your daily dose of all things bookish.

Announcements

Barnes & Noble introduces nook

Check out our November Discussion Schedule

Become a fan of Barnes & Noble on Facebook!

Check Out Our Blogs!

> [Unabashedly Bookish](#)

> [Letter Blocks](#)

> [Food for Thought](#)

> [Garden Variety](#)

> [Heart to Heart](#)

> [Ransom Notes](#)

> [Unbound](#)

> [All Announcements](#)

Book Clubs Twitter

Who introduced you to reading? RIZZO'S WAR author Lou Manfredo thanks his dad. <http://bit.ly/1RZHRM> about 6 hours ago

A fantasy world where people's souls go down a spirit stream and end up on Earth when they

> [Follow BNBookClubs](#)

languages; had six university degrees--he was just fascinating. When I was in my late twenties I decided to interview him for an essay I wanted to write about my larger-than-life, eccentric dad. I had his permission, at first--for two years, he came to my house and talked into a tape recorder. But when I started to fact-check the piece, the whole house of cards came tumbling down. The story ran in Esquire in April 2003 under the title, "My Father, the Fraud," and I wrote it anonymously. I just wasn't ready to expose him to the world.] But when the piece came out I was left with more questions than answers, so I hired a private investigator and really started to dig. For four years, I struggled to write the memoir; mainly, I was just terrified to expose my dad. He'd already stopped speaking to me, but the aura he left was so powerful: I was afraid he'd hurt me, I was also afraid he'd hurt himself. Around that time, I discovered a box of cartoons in the attic I'd done as a child, between the ages of 7 and 10. That's when I knew the story had to be graphic--the entire story was there, in my childhood cartoons.

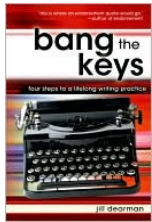
JD: Could you both talk about what your writing process is like? What's the hardest stage? Most rewarding?

LS: The writing process for this particular book was a Herculean effort, and one I hope will be different the next time around. First I had to amass and sift through a mountain of documents; then I agonized over how it was all going to affect my family; then I wrote and fits and starts--on weekends, early in the morning, at month-long stints at writers colonies--all while holding down a full-time job at Glamour. (Now I'm on contract, so my writing life is a lot easier.) I wrote 350 pages of a memoir that I threw away, then I started over from scratch in a completely different form. I had no idea how to put together a graphic memoir so I consulted books like *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Creating a Graphic Novel*, and *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud, and various blogs on the subject. My most rewarding moments always happened when I was really into the writing, so much so that I would look up and realize I'd written ten pages without once thinking about my book party or who I was going to thank on the acknowledgments page.

LW: Laurie's commitment to writing her memoir totally inspired me. She was always heading off to another colony, urging me to apply as well. It was part of her job. My process was exactly the same--the mountain of research, the reliving painful moments, the hours and hours of writing pages to get to the pages that will finally make it to print. but since I was doing it with my sister, we came up with our own writer's colony idea: Diana lives in Austin, I live in New York and so we agreed to meet somewhere every third month for two years. We'd make incredible meals, laugh, cry, and then go on hike. The writing itself was grueling and freeing and I could not have done it without my sister! Just as Laurie has told me more than once, she could not have written her memoir without the support of Blue Mountain, the retreat where she was able to find that kind of support to finish hers. The bottom line is, writing a memoir is hard work--but I think Laurie and I were both born into family stories that made it inevitable.

LS: And now we DO get to enjoy our book parties.

At last! Laurie's book is available now, and Liz's is available by pre-order. For more writerly tips and convo come to <http://www.bangthekeys.com>, and for a writing workshop in a book that you can share with your writing buddies, check out my latest:



Bang the Keys .

Grab a pal and get to work!

All Users' Tags: Jill_Dearman Laurie_Sandell Liz_Welch William_Faulkner View All (4)

Categories: writer to writer

Permalink



« Back to Blog « Newer Article Older Article »

Comments

by [kkbNJ](#) on 09-17-2009 01:43 PM

Options

What a beautiful interview. I am inspired by both writers and the depth of their friendship. Passion and integrity seem to lay such important parts in both their lives.

Permalink

0

by [BLOGGER: Jill_Dearman](#) on 09-18-2009 10:08 AM

Options

Indeed, impressive how L&L have kept each other on the right path for their writing!

Permalink

0

by [LizM42](#) on 09-18-2009 10:19 AM

Options

die. Sound familiar? <http://bit.ly/4FUJdG> about 23 hours ago

Stop by and chat with Debbie Macomber. <http://bit.ly/sgTVQ1> 1 day ago

Top Laureled Posts

Mapping Banned Books	14
Re: Should Art be Prohibited? Or, Will The Adventu...	11
Let's split! Infinitive s, that is.	10
Let's Get Serial	10
The Appeal of Old Maps	10

View All

Latest Articles

New Kids' Book About "The Greatest" Floats Like a Butterfly and Stings Like a Bee

Hyphen-ate your brain? Hyphens and Meaning: Part I...

"To Babylon myself there" Authors Plan, Cover Gods Laugh

First Lines are Like First Dates

I'm Buying this Book for a Friend...

People of Earth! Don't Panic! The Hitchhiker's Gui...

The Great Mortality and the Specter of Popular His...

The Sexual Convolution Reading as Self Defense

Latest Comments

[R=MOD](#) Melissa_W on: "To Babylon myself there"

[PrincessBumblebee](#) on: Authors Plan, Cover Gods Laugh

[R=MOD](#) Melissa_W on: First Lines are Like First Dates

[BLOGGER](#) LisaSteinke on: I'm Buying this Book for a Friend...

[MOD](#) paulgoatallen on: People of Earth! Don't Panic! The Hitchhiker's Gui...

[R=MOD](#) Melissa_W on: The Great Mortality and the Specter of Popular His...

[PrincessBumblebee](#) on: The Sexual Convolution

[KathyS](#) on: Reading as Self Defense

[Vermontcozy](#) on: Let's Have A Round for These Friends of Mine

It is inspiring how both authors have explored their pasts with honesty and compassion. I'm looking forward to some great memoir reading.

Permalink

0

by [joybeck](#) on 09-21-2009 02:16 PM

Options

I was lucky to get an early galley read of *The Kids are All Right* by Liz Welch and was immediately moved to ask my own kids how they remembered family events. No two responses were the same! Thank you Liz for this moving and rich memoir that compels us to love and respect even more the family differences that make us ever forever closer.
joybeck

Permalink

0

« Back to Blog « Newer Article Older Article »

You must be a registered user to add a comment on this article. If you've already registered, please log in. If you haven't registered yet, please register and log in.

[LizFenton](#) on: My Own Mr. Right

Categories

- article (1)
- book explorers (2)
- caption the cover (3)
- current events (14)
- current events news (1)
- decoding the lost symbol (9)
- fantasy and science fiction (1)
- for what it's worth (17)
- guest author (9)
- historical fiction (1)
- history (8)
- history and historical fiction (2)
- internet (1)
- literary history (31)
- literature & life (30)
- max syntax (27)
- modern and future english (4)
- news (4)
- pop culture (1)
- romance (30)
- romance fiction (27)
- Science (1)
- science fiction & fantasy (29)
- science fiction and fantasy (1)
- sports (1)
- tagged (1)
- tagged! (8)
- the friday five (9)
- the reader's advocate (16)
- the readers' advoaacte (1)
- the readers' advocate (25)
- writer to writer (21)

Archives

- November 2009
- October 2009
- September 2009
- August 2009
- July 2009
- June 2009
- May 2009
- April 2009
- [View Complete Archives](#)

Advertisement



B&N Services

About B&N
Investor Relations
Barnes & Noble, Inc
Careers at BN.com

Affiliate Network
Corporate,
Government & Libraries
Publisher & Author Guidelines

Deferred Billing
B&N Membership
Bulk Order Discounts
B&N Bookfairs

Shipping & Delivery

About Fast&Free Delivery
About Shipping

Shipping Rates
Store Returns

Quick Help

Customer Service
Order Status

Easy Returns
All Help Desk
Site Map

[Terms of Use, Copyright, and Privacy Policy](#)

© 1997-2009 Barnesandnoble.com llc