

## Meg Moseley: Writer

by Meg Moseley

I attribute my yen for writing fiction to my book-loving dad. When I was six or so, I sometimes played in the office of his menswear store while he worked. He often gave me blank sheets of paper to staple into miniature books. The empty pages begged to be filled, but it was an exercise in futility because I couldn't spell many words. Sometimes I banged away at his late mother's old typewriter instead. That was frustrating too, but it made me feel connected to "Gran."

I never knew Gran, but even as a child I knew I wanted to be like her. She was a writer whose magazine articles, poetry, and children's stories helped keep food on her table during the Great Depression, not an easy time to sell anything. Although my parents never pressured me to write, their praise for Gran's accomplishments made me see writing as an occupation that truly mattered.

My dad was the keeper of the unpublished manuscript in which Gran had recorded family stories, making her ancestors live again in their roles as pioneers, circuit riders, and gold miners. A gifted storyteller, she made me feel the sway of her grandfather's Conestoga wagon, see gold flakes glimmering in the pan, and taste the juicy peaches her father raised near Los Angeles before it became a metropolis.

In spite of my early exposure to the joys of storytelling, as a young adult I fell prey to the warped belief that if a novel wasn't overtly Christian, it had no redeeming qualities. For years, I avoided general market fiction. It wasn't until I was homeschooling my children that I knew I was starving for good stories. Classic children's books wooed me back into reading a broad range of novels for adults.

I was in my forties before I tried to write a novel, and I didn't know the first thing about the process. Happily deluded at first, I thought my first novel was pretty good. Nobody agreed with me, but I kept writing. One of my best learning experiences was my stint as a "community columnist" for a suburban section of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. I received the promised pay of "all the newsprint you can eat" plus an occasional dinner with the other columnists. The experience gave me confidence, if nothing else. I kept writing fiction too, but with growing frustration. Like my six-year-old self, I knew what I longed to do but I didn't know how to do it.

That began to change when I discovered writers' groups and critique partners who helped me learn the craft. I wrote six novels before I produced one worthy of publication, but the ones that didn't sell weren't a waste of time. Each one brought me closer to knowing what I wanted to write. Not boy-meets-girl stories, although they're fun, but woman-meets-patriarchy stories, or man-meets-racism stories. Now, instead of filling homemade books with first-grade words, I fill a blank computer screen with words that I pray will matter. It's really all I've ever wanted to do.