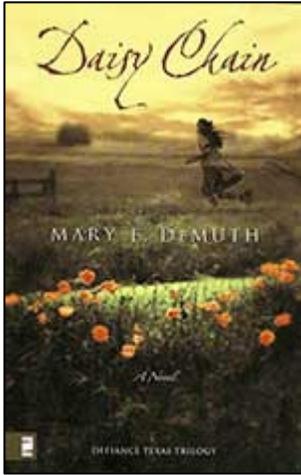


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- April 2009



Every time I logged on to Twitter over the last month or so, I heard about a book titled, *Daisy Chain*.

Did you make daisy chains as a child? I did. Sometimes they worked, sometimes they fell apart, but the pleasure was in the doing.

I knew the book was fiction, and I'd heard it was a southern book, which often means a certain flavor, a subgenre, usually more literary in style.

I knew the author, Mary DeMuth, had earned a Christy Award nomination on her first novel. All things pointed to a good read. So after the umpteenth reference to the book, I e-mailed Mary and asked her if her publisher could send me a review copy. They did, and the book sat in my 'To Be Read' stack.

I don't know about you, but that stack can get quite high at times until I decide: "Do Not Buy More Books Until That Stack Goes Down!" I decided I'd use *Daisy Chain* in my next column and I needed to get reading.

A line on the back cover said Mary likes to write about turning trials into triumphs. A woman after my own heart. The opening line: "It had been thirty roller coaster years since Daisy Marie Chance forced fourteen year old Jed Pepper to fall in love with her." Oh, my, the secrets that line hinted at. I couldn't stop reading, even if I'd wanted to. The second line cinched it. "He'd obliged her, dizzied at the thought ever since."

The setting helped too. Defiance, Texas. If I wasn't already reading as fast as I could, the back cover copy would have done its job. A disappearance, small town characters with such wonderful names like Muriel and Ouisie, lives intertwined with each other and the mysteries and cover ups that go along with a terrible tragedy.

Mary spins an enthralling yarn

So now that I'm finally writing the column and can look back on the reading, I wonder what it is I'd like writers to learn from this? The answers are: life can go off in so many directions and the writer, as an observer, must choose which to follow in the lives of their characters.

Most everyone hides a secret or two, the trick when writing, is to choose the life-threatening ones. Now life-threatening might not mean a physical death, but can mean the death of a dream, or the death of sanity, or the death of a relationship, be it friend or family.

Most writers are people watchers, or at least they need to be. So what do you see when you watch? Everyone goes around with their public face on, but what is going on behind that mask?

“How are you?” people say, and we answer, “Fine.” When that might not be the case at all, but who is brave enough to answer otherwise? *Why, that might not be polite*, we think, or if things are really bad: *I might cry or fall apart and that would make everyone uncomfortable*.

There are stories behind the masks and a writer will search for them, write them, and in the telling of the story, bring healing to themselves and often healing to their readers.

Remember those coming of age years? Are there stories in your life that you can make larger if necessary, wider and deeper? Stories into which you can weave and involve the characters you create? The more universal the stories, the more appealing they will be to readers.

One writer on writing said, “Just open a vein” and sometimes it feels that way. Mary DeMuth obviously did so with *Daisy Chain*. I hope you enjoy her story as much as I did.

Until next time,

Happy spring, and happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine