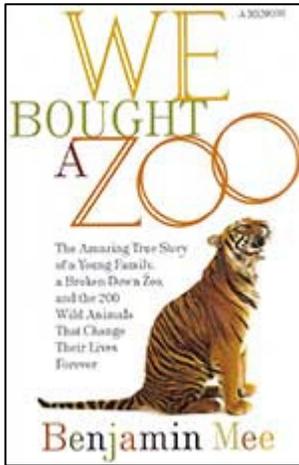


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- February 2009



Cats on a book cover must be a draw for me, since I reviewed *Dewey* last month. Only the cat on the cover of *We Bought a Zoo* is a Bengal tiger. They both caught my attention and this book too lived up to my expectations.

Memoirs are a genre that I've never read before. Note the word *never*. Lots of people keep telling me about great memoirs. I see them advertised everywhere I look, and in bookstores, I can't turn around without seeing one on the display tables.

Everyone from celebrities to everyday folks seem to want to tell their story, and publishers are buying them. Therefore we can purchase them and read about their lives. Great covers are a strong buyer pull, and of course, different things appeal to different folks. Animals of any kind are a draw for me. Those who know me and my writing are not surprised, since there are animals in all of my books. Just not Bengal tigers.

Benjamin Mee is the author, a man who had a dream to revitalize a dying zoo in the English countryside. He convinced his family to go along with his dream, including his seventy-six year old mother. I was enthralled with her willingness to invest both her life savings and physical effort in her son's dream. What a woman. While most of the family thought this was great, several extended family members described the whole venture as insane.

Money plagues paled when Mee's wife had a re-occurrence of a brain tumor. How does this man cope with a dying wife, two small children, eccentric animals, less than helpful regulations and a rapidly dwindling cash flow?

Therein lays their fascinating story. Had this been fiction, editors would say it was too unrealistic.

Once again, the healing power of animals is shown as Mee works to get his animals cared for, the staff trained and the zoo opened.

One line of many that resonated with me. “All we had to do now was work out what to happen next.” Isn’t life like that? Work it out instead of stewing over it? The big word is *all*. That’s also one of life’s hard words.

So what does writing have to do with all this? I’ve written many times about using your life adventures and misadventures to write both articles and fiction. You can also use the experiences of those around you. However the information comes to you, the important advice is: Use it! Ideas abound like dandelion fluff on a spring breeze. They float down on the seeker and the unsuspecting. The wise writers do something with those ideas. Others think, “Hmmm, that’s a very good idea”, ponder it awhile and go on to something else.

I’ve been in that situation many times and then find out later that someone else published that story or article. Hmmm. Guess I need to go out and follow my own advice. I hope you do the same.

Until next time,

Happy readin’ & writin’ from Lauraine