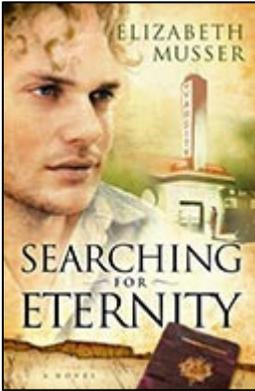


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- November 2007



I think I lost a couple of months. If any of you find a wandering September or October, please send them my way. August would help too. In spite of lots of travel, I found a new author for you. Actually, I sat next to her at a convention dinner in July, and made a fascinating new friend. Elizabeth Musser is an American living in France and her novel, *Searching for Eternity* is set partly there and partly in the Atlanta where she grew up.

This could be called a bookends story. We meet Emile de Bonnery as an adult in the 1980's, but he tells the story of being a young teen ripped from his home in France and brought to America by his American mother, leaving his French father, an active participant in the French resistance, behind. Emile has a hard time fitting in, and there are many unanswered questions about their leaving France that beset him for the next twenty years. The last part of the story is about Emile as an adult, still seeking answers.

Part coming of age, part historical, part misfit story, *Searching for Eternity* sneaks into your heart and take up residence as Elizabeth takes you on ride through time, heart ache and reminders of a past that most of us would rather forget. Georgia in the 1960's, France in the occupation, the search for the Nazi's who butchered not only the Jews but thousands of others, Klause Barbi coming to trial, and the effects of those horrific events on people yet today.

Elizabeth did her homework, and her research, well.

So what of this book could be a lesson for the rest of us writers? Since she has lived many years in both the places she chose to write about, the author creates a time and place for her readers that makes us want to go there, become part of the community, even step back in time. She is gifted in character development; I immediately cared about Emile, his mother, his two so different grandmothers, and his first friend in the states, Eternity Jones. Nothing was easy for her characters and as the story progressed, the twists and turns grew more surprising. She did not choose the easy way out for any of the people in *Searching for Eternity*, nor bail them out with clichés.

Secrets. That's what she used so superbly. Everyone in the story had secrets and many of them weren't revealed until near the end. Many writers don't take the time to dig into their characters. Determining what characters want in their deepest longings, then what secrets can be woven in and through the story, creates suspense for the readers and tension for the characters. In Emile's case, lives were at stake if the wrong people learned the answers to the secrets. In the book, the question arises: in order for a parent to protect their children is lying sometimes necessary? And the follow up: how can you build love and trust on a foundation of lies?

To build your character development skills, take a book like *Searching for Eternity* and study what the author did. Outline the story, discuss it with others and use what you learn to create your own. The great masters taught painting this way, and one can learn about writing this way too. Study, even to copying some chapters, by hand is best, a book you love and admire. And then write. The most important way to learn to write, is to write. Study and rewrite. But write as often as you can.

Reading and writing fit hand in glove, and I love finding books like *Searching for Eternity* to read, to share with others.

So pick up your copy today! I hope you find your lost or misplaced time too.

Also, don't forget to check out my new website, www.blessingnd.com, where you can find out what is happening in the town I created, Blessing, ND, as it becomes a real place thanks to the folks of Drayton, ND.

And make sure to visit your local book store this month, too. You can pick up a copy of your favorite book, or start your Christmas shopping early. Books are a lasting gift.

Until next time,

Happy Readin' and Writin' from Lauraine