



Vol. 3, No. 30, OCTOBER 2021

- New Release: *None Stood Taller: The Final Year, I'll Be Home for Christmas*
- Author Spotlight: Mary Armstrong

From the Editor



We're kicking off a new month with this issue – October – the month of All Hallows Eve. Or, as most parents know it as – the night of taking the youngsters out for trick-or-treating. Although, according to most of the Facebook posts I'm seeing now, this is the month that kicks off a new favorite season – Pumpkin Spice Season. Since I love the aroma and taste of pumpkin spice, I'm find with that.

We're also seeing lots of new books coming out over the next few months. We're highlighting two new releases this month instead of only one. They're by two of our favorite authors that we've spotlighted before with previous books: Peter Turnham and MW Arnold.

I'm going to wrap this up now and send off to the mailing list, followed by sharing on Facebook and other sites. Then I'm heading back to 1945, as I work on finishing up my own book, *The POW's Legacy*, that will be released on Veteran's Day (November 11th).

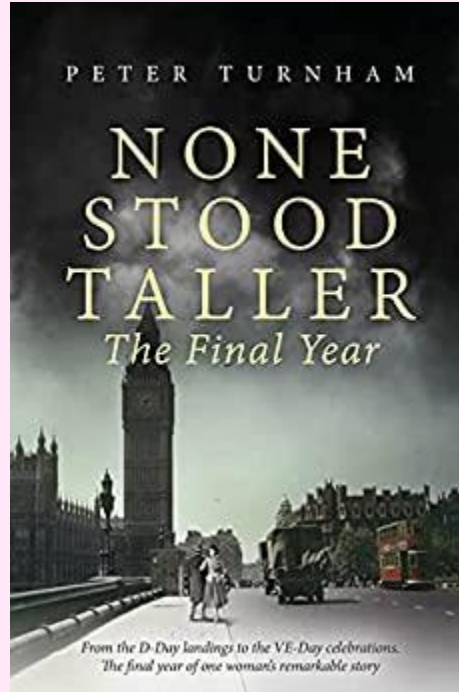
Stay tuned–in the next few issues, we'll be chatting with Carolyn E. Cook, Roxi Harms, and Alex Schulz!

Trisha

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New Releases



[None Stood Taller: The Final Year](#)

Peter Turnham

Step back once again into Britain's wartime past. Relive the final year of WW2 and this inspirational story of courage, life and love will make your heart soar.

The story continues from June 6th, 1944. The sun has finally set upon one of the most momentous events in British history. For Lily Heywood and Edward, Lord Middlebourne, D-Day marked the culmination of three years of intensive research and ultimately crushing responsibility. SOE Station M has completed its work. This might have signalled the end of the intelligence unit's wartime involvement. Events, however, conspire otherwise. Hitler's vengeance weapons prove to be a threat worthy of Station M's special skills. This is the world that shapes Lily's life.

Lily knows she can only commit to one of the two men in her life, her future remains as uncertain as ever. When a V1 flying bomb leaves Edward critically injured, only destiny can decide her future. A part of that future was waiting on a launch ramp in the Pas-de-Calais. Once more, destiny decides when the bringer of death will strike at Lily's heart. From the depths of despair, she is offered a new future from beyond the grave. The final year proves to be the longest of the war for Lily. When it was finally over, the people of Great Britain came together with the greatest outpouring of emotion the nation has ever seen. May the 8th 1945 is the day that changes Lily's life forever.



I'll Be Home for Christmas

WM Arnold

A mysterious key left by her murdered sister takes Air Transport Auxiliary pilot Betty Palmer on a journey of discovery and danger. Her estranged parents force themselves back into her life, motivated purely by greed and self-preservation.

Penny's life is unexpectedly turned upside down by a potentially life-changing situation that causes her wounded husband to question their marriage. No one seems safe in the turmoil of the middle years of the war, and some relationships face a breaking point whilst others become stronger.

Kidnap, crashes, and dogfights—the women of the Air Transport Auxiliary Mystery Club have never faced such dangers before. To survive may not be enough. They must find the strength to rise above their most trying times yet.

Author Spotlight: Mary Armstrong



Hello Mary Armstrong! We're excited to chat with you today about your writing. What drew you to write historical fiction?

Good question and not one that I have asked myself. To start, probably a love of history and the nuance and behind-the-scenes details that make history come to life. Second, a love of reading good historical fiction. Third, probably the excitement I feel when I discover something like there were over 50,000 telephone customers of Bell Telephone in 1881 and with the knowledge of how that can frame the times I'm writing about.

Can you tell us a little about your book, *The Mesilla*, and how it came about?

I arrived in Las Cruces in January 2010. Not long after, I read a book about the history of Las Cruces by Gordon Owen. That revealed the Fountain murders of 1896, which enticed me to read everything I could get my hands on connected with Colonel Albert J. Fountain, Albert Fall, Oliver Lee, Pat Garrett, and others.

The result of those many years of reading was a one-act play that was performed here by our community theater group in 2017 and then the first book in the series, "The Mesilla" in April 2021. The story is told by a fictional nephew of the Colonel who comes to 'read law'. Jesus is fourteen years old when he arrives at the Fountain adobe in 1886. Book One focuses on the Fountain family, Jesus's experiences assisting the Colonel in their office and court, and the early stages of adolescence. The court case of Bronco Sue Dawson is the primary plot driver. Bronco Sue was a very colorful historic character. There are many versions of her life, but none that was told by her and I wanted to give her a 'voice.' Most writers characterize her as a harlot, husband killer, and gold-digger. In my version of her story, she still does all the things others suggest she did and goes to all the places she went. In my version, there is

a considerable back story that acknowledges how difficult the wild west was for women, especially single women.

I dedicated “The Mesilla” to my mother, Midge Armstrong. She is a big fan of what she calls “Pioneer Stories.” She lives in Iowa and I live in New Mexico. I call her every day at 4:15 pm. When I finally decided how I was going to tell the story of what led to the notorious and unsolved Fountain murders, I thought she might like it. After I had drafted a few chapters, I told her about it. Every day, she asked me to read what I had written. Nearly two years after I first started reading to her, I was able to go to Iowa and get a photograph of the two of us holding the book.

Do you have any favorite methods you use in researching your books?

Not really. I will say that I go down the rabbit hole often when researching. Sometimes I wind up not remembering why I started! I usually pick out a few books I believe will be my primary references for the background history. With this series, I read several more, but I have depended on “Tularosa” by Sonnichsen, “The Two Alberts” by Owens, and “The Life and Death of Colonel Albert Jennings Fountain,” by Gibson. All those books and a few others have color-coded sticky notes cluttering their outsides. I depend on google quite a lot and sometimes that leads me to buy another book – as was the case with “The Fabulous Frontier” by Kelcher, “The Red Blooded,” by Bronson; “Loretto,” by Mary J. Straw, and “Buckboard Days” by Sophie A. Poe.

Tell us about one of your favorite characters from *The Mesilla*.

Aside from the protagonist Jesus, the entire Fountain family appealed to me. They were smart, studious, creative, and in the case of Tommy, mischievous. I have included several factual stories about the family and a few others that are fictional creations based upon what I can take from my primary references. However, most people will probably enjoy Bronco Sue. She is almost universally portrayed as a harlot, husband killer, and gold-digger, but very little is written about the circumstances of her so-called crimes and I think women in general and specifically single women had a very rough go of it in the wild west.

What challenges have you found with writing historical fiction?

Making sure of the details. It would be easy to charge off with fictional scenes or using words that are common today. You have to be patient. I would say that on an average day I put in more time researching than I do writing. I also think that you have to determine what historical fiction means for yourself. There are some historical fiction ‘police’ out there that want to drag you down if your version doesn’t match theirs. I’ve been fortunate not to have any readers question my research, but you will see it on historical fiction Facebook group pages occasionally. I just think that if people want scholarly historical works they should read scholarly historical works. My objective is to take my readers to the time and place, and perhaps experience a historic event or events as close to the actual occurrences as possible.

I’ve seen that you’re working on the next book in your Two Valleys Saga. Can you give us a little teaser about it and let us know when we can look for it?

Thanks for asking! Yes, it’s coming and I hope to release it before Thanksgiving this year. My original manuscript for “The Mesilla” was over seven hundred pages. I cut it to four hundred and so I had a good start on Book Two. Since the series covers ten years, in each book I need to tease my readers with

events and dialogue that hint at the climax. I'm currently filling those in and adding some more 'color' to Jesus's learning about the bird and the bees. I think my readers will find it is tasteful and funny.

One of the things that my research has given me is a strong appreciation for just how multicultural the wild west was and I like to convey that with the people that Jesus and the Colonel come across. One of my favorites is coming in Book Two. There is a scene with a fictional Lieutenant Norman Fraser and his United Kingdom platoon of soldiers about how they came to be in Mexico.

Do you write in any genre other than historical fiction?

I have some short stories that are of various genres. My first attempt at a novel, "The Marauders", is a two-lane highway in an RV trip across the country short of being completed. It is a dystopian, dysgenic, futuristic novel. I wrote most of what I have drafted for that book on my laptop while watching Red Sox baseball. I was able to do so, not because I dislike the Red Sox — quite the opposite — but because baseball lends itself to doing other things without losing track of the game.

When you find time for reading, what kind of books would we find stacked on your nightstand?

For the last year or so, it's mostly books relating to book marketing, but when I get a chance to read for pleasure, I mostly read historical fiction. I believe I have read every book Kenneth Follett has written. I love Diana Gabaldon's "The Outlander" series — and despise what Starz has done to it. I also enjoyed Sara Donati's "Wilderness" series. I liked "All the Light We Cannot See," but it was overwritten for my taste. I prefer to 'wax poetic' only when the situation is poignant to the point it requires emphasis. Otherwise, I want to leave something to the imagination. While I was away from home a short time ago I read "News of the World." The story was riveting, but I didn't care for Jiles lack of dialogue punctuation. For me, that was a little too far down the historical fiction rabbit hole.

Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?

I don't generally go around spouting off about this, but I am transgender. I was made whole through surgery as a woman in 2005 after two years of transition. I am married to a wonderful African American man, and I was previously married twice; first to a first-generation Italian American woman and then to a first-generation French Canadian woman. I love getting to know people of other cultures and have traveled to most of the continents. I have worked in City and Federal Government worked in private practice and owned my own business.

I feel all these experiences give me a unique 'voice.'





You can find Mary Armstrong's books here:

“The Mesilla: The Two Valleys Sage: Book One”

<https://www.amazon.com/Mesilla-Two-Valleys-Saga-Book-ebook/dp/B093CPZ71B>

When the Doves Coo: A Prequel Novelette to The Two Valleys Saga

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09GHHXYTZ>

It is Blood: A Historical Fiction Play in One Act

<https://www.amazon.com/Blood-Historical-Fiction-Play-One-ebook/dp/B095PVZ8NY>

You can find Mary Armstrong here:

Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/maryarmstrongauthor>

My website:

<https://maryarmstrongauthor.com>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/authornotarthur>

BIO: Mary has diverse interests but has recently focused on historical fiction. Her writing is fast-moving, thought-provoking and with just enough wordsmithing to satisfy your artistic hankerings. Since retiring from a diverse career in various planning and design fields, she has devoted herself to writing, being a good spouse, serving her dog Java, and slipping away to the golf course when left unchained to the desk.

Mary was a weekly columnist for the Las Cruces Sun-News for two years.

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