

Farm Girl book review

Written by Julie Beckman

There is an unmistakable piece of one's character which seems to be a direct result of being raised on the rolling plains of the midwest. It is an unfabricated existence, away from cities, in a unique world filled with memories of family, neighbors and trips to the big cities. Anyone who has ever lived or ventured to the quaint farms of the plains can without hesitation recall the peace and serenity those endless fields possess.

In her book "Farm Girl," Karen Jones Gowen tells the story of the unspoiled childhood of her mother, Lucille Marker Jones. Born and raised on a small homestead in western Nebraska, Gowen shares the story of her mother's life.

Initially writing in an attempt to somehow go back to the summers of her own childhood, Gowen first began to consider writing a book. However, it was not until participating in a class at Brigham Young University that she realized it was her mother's story, and not her own, that she wished to share.

Through the class, Gowen learned about a writing style called folklore. The folklore style uses the author as a collector of the story, and the central character of the story as the voice the story is told through.

The book's folklore style takes some adjustment for the reader initially, but after a short time the voice becomes clear.

Gowen used countless numbers of phone conversations with her mother to collect the story's content before finally compiling the stories she wished to tell.

Through the voice of her mother, Gowen takes readers through the adventures and struggle of her mother's life. The book begins with the story of how her grandparents, who were homesteaders, got to the plains of Nebraska and in the end, the story of how her parents met.

As the book progresses, Lucille's life becomes dominant, with accounts of her parents and various relatives seamlessly intertwined. From her childhood adventures to the stories about each of her very different parents, the story comes to life and in the process an underlying story emerges. The emerging story is not of people, but rather is of an unforgettable time in history.

The time period the book is written in gives us a look into several decades which held great hopes and indescribable hardships. It takes us from the "roaring twenties" filled with technological progress and a sigh of relief after the war, to the "dirty thirties" which brought drought, economic instability and hardships from coast to coast.

Through the intertwined stories of the life of the Marker family and of the broader historical time period, the book is more than captivating. Gowen's vivid accounts of her mother's life allow the book to read as seamlessly as if one were recalling personal memories.