

MEMORY QUILT

PREFACE

*"I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes."*

*-- Refrain from Keali'i Reichel's song, "Wanting
Memories"*

Memories are as ephemeral as fog on the mountain, yet they return again and again as the stories we tell ourselves. These become our private truths. This book centers on my grandma, but to others she was *Mama, Laura, Miz Stroud, landlady, generous friend, neighbor*. The way each person knew her differs. Similarly, the same event carries unique significance for each one involved. Each person's memory of Laura Stroud remains as an individual truth but has a different angle, a different meaning, evokes more or less passion for someone else.

Writing *Memory Quilt* made this fact clear. The title chose itself because writing this collection was like piecing a quilt, each patch made of a different cloth. Some stories here were told to me by various family members and I added their memories to my own. The focus kept growing, starting with Grandma and encompassing the whole extended family. How to stitch the pieces together was the challenge.

Any writer knows that a clear point of view is essential. There has to be a single observer through whose eyes the action takes place, and it soon became clear that the only lens I could have on such a personal subject was my own, seen as a young girl and understood only decades later. So I've told the truth as I know it, gathering my memories from the late 1940's and early 1950's and working in the stories of others.

I recall one actual quilt in Grandma's big, narrow bedroom. It warmed Grandpa during his long illness. Sturdy and heavy, it was made of scraps of wool cut from discarded winter coats. Red yarn knots centered each piece, but the woolen colors were dark, making it seem even cozier on cold nights. I often thought of this quilt as I wrote, for memories really are like quilt pieces. Glimpsed separately, none of them is quite whole, but their odd shapes can be patched together. This book is made from scraps of events that happened more than half a century ago. Like Grandma's, this memory quilt is offered as a gift of warmth.

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