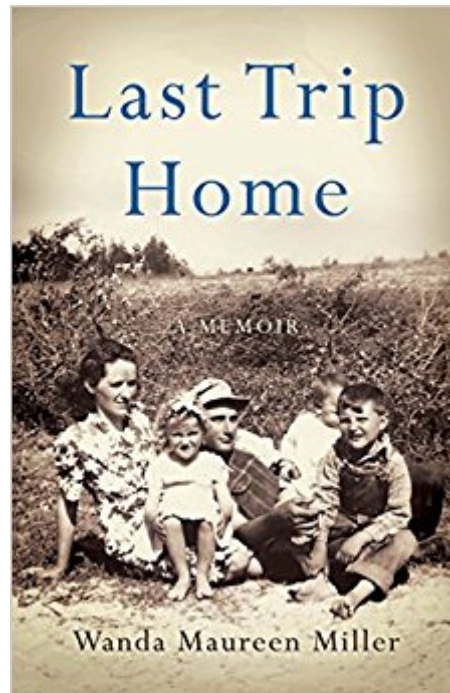




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Last Trip Home: A Memoir



Synopsis

“Who do you thank you are, the Quane of Anglund?” That’s what Grace Marie’s father used to say to her whenever he thought she was getting out of her place. In her fifties now, Grace Marie is a college professor living in a beach town in California, and when she gets a phone call telling her that her father is dead, she is glad. She hopes her return for his funeral will be her “last trip home.” As a young girl Grace Marie struggled to escape from poverty, her father’s lecherous, controlling grip, and a husband in the Klan. Determined to get an education, she clawed her way to a comfortable life and a home with indoor toilets—but her most unexpected struggle turned out to be survivor’s guilt, so she kept returning home to “fix” her family and the sharecropper shack. After her father’s funeral, Grace Marie burns down the family home only to discover that she has unexpected ties to both the land and the people in her community. She realizes she will never have a “last trip home.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“With a writer’s voice that is sassy and vibrant, Wanda Maureen Miller’s gripping narrative took me by the heart and the scruff of my neck into regions I would never otherwise have explored.” —Nancy Bacal, creator and leader of The Writer’s Way workshops, editor of Leonard Cohen’s anthology, *Stranger Music*, and writer/producer of *RAGA*, starring Ravi Shankar and George Harrison “An outrageous story of love and redemption set in the not-so-gracious South, from an exciting and completely original new voice. *Last Trip Home* is for people who like their sanity skewed.” —Terri Cheney, author of

the New York Times bestseller *Manic* and blogger for *Psychology Today*—“A candid, piercing, and often funny reveal of how kith and kin in an Arkansas sharecropper shack can both maim and love. Miller is a literary sharpshooter whose memoir of her impoverished family eking by on squirrel provides riveting redneck rubbernecking.”

—Gali Kronenberg, former reporter for the Los Angeles Times and San Diego Union Tribune

“In post–World War II Arkansas, Grace Marie escapes her insular past with its strict behavior codes for females. Scrubbing away drawl and shame, she is now an emancipated woman in California. Yet she feels compelled to return home repeatedly when her family desperately needs help. The tone is often dark, yet there is redemption in her rise above poverty, shameful secrets, and a violent, out-of-bounds father. The story takes the cliché ‘you can’t go home again’ theme and turns it into a more complicated look at community bonds, family love, and sense of duty.”

—Sharon Steeber, professor of English at Santa Monica College, author of *The Jews*, and coauthor of the *Reading Faster and Understanding More* series

“As a black American, I approached *Last Trip Home* with trepidation but couldn’t stop reading. I remember my parents’ stories about violence from the Texas Ku Klux Klan. The characters are gut wrenchingly real, presented with both brutal honesty and humor. I got an insight into a way of thinking and living diametrically opposed to all that I’ve known and respected; yet I felt pity and empathy. I cheered when Grace Marie burned her husband’s KKK sheet. This book shows how the world of reading can open up a young mind. I profoundly appreciate the insight and hope represented.”

—Judy Francis, former diplomat for the US Department of State

Like her main character, Grace Marie, Wanda Maureen Miller grew up on an Arkansas farm, read and wrote for escape, got an education, and moved to California. She taught college English and published four other books. She is retired now and lives in Manhattan Beach, CA, with a retired doctor. She has a daughter and granddaughter living in North Carolina and still owns the farm she grew up on.

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