

A CONVERSATION WITH WENDY WEBB

What inspired you to write your award-winning book?

My spouse, Steve Burmeister, and I took a vacation to Mackinac Island, which struck me as one of the most beautiful — and eeriest — places I had ever visited. I think it was the combination of traveling everywhere in horse-and-carriage (no cars are allowed on the island), the 100-plus-year-old Victorian mansions (many now bed-and-breakfast inns) and the prominent, ancient cemetery that got me thinking about a ghost story.

How long did it take you to write the book?

Not long. Six months at most, including edits.

What interesting challenges did you encounter in writing *The Tale of Halcyon Crane*?

First, with a full-time job (I'm a magazine editor) and a family, finding the time to write was a challenge. Secondly, since I don't outline my books, sometimes I'd write myself into a corner and have to puzzle my way out. It involved lots of walks with the dog, mulling over plot points!

What do you like most about the book?

My favorite thing about the book is something very sentimental. Madlyn's two Alaskan malamutes, Tundra and Tika, are my two dogs. Tika passed away before the book was published,

"I'm a Minnesotan through and through. My characters are conglomerations of people I've known in my life, or wish to know, and they're all Minnesotan."

and Tundra passed away while I was on the book tour. Now they are immortalized together in my first novel. That's pretty special.

What was your journey to becoming a published author?

When I was about 13 years old, I read *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle. After I finished it, I knew I wanted to be an author and write books for a living. But the journey was not an easy one. I wrote, with a co-author, a young adult fantasy novel that

was quickly picked up by a major publisher, but we lost that deal. I wrote another novel, on my own this time, that didn't find a publisher. *Halcyon* was my third effort. I wasn't going to stop writing until I came up with a book that worked. Luckily for me, I have a fantastic agent who has believed in me from the very first day.

How does being a Minnesotan inform your writing?

There is a mysticism and a sense of magic about the Great Lakes—and Lake Superior in particular—that has a great pull for me. Also, I'm a Minnesotan through and through. My characters are conglomerations of people I've known in my life, or wish to know, and they're all Minnesotan.

Minnesota Book Award Categories:

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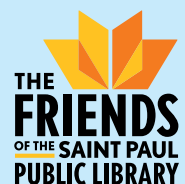
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MINNESOTA BOOK AWARDS

Genre Fiction Winner

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*"The Tale of Halcyon Crane is a wonderful gothic complete with ghosts and witches, graveyards and dreams. Captivating and haunting, this debut proves Wendy Webb is a very gifted storyteller."
— M. J. Rose, author of The Memory Palace*

THE TALE OF HALCYON CRANE



WENDY WEBB

The Tale of Halcyon Crane

by Wendy Webb

HENRY HOLT & COMPANY

The Tale of Halcyon Crane

SUMMARY

When a mysterious letter lands in Hallie James' mailbox, her life is upended. Hallie was raised by a loving father, having been told that her mother, Madlyn, died in a fire decades earlier. But it turns out that Madlyn was alive until just recently. Why would Hallie's father have lied and taken her away from Madlyn? What really happened to their family thirty years ago? In search of answers, Hallie travels to Madlyn's home on a remote island in the middle of the Great Lakes, where she encounters dark secrets and unexpected experiences.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the book's main themes?
2. Was Madlyn alive when she wrote the letter?
3. Was Hallie's father justified in taking her away from her mother?
4. What do you think of Madlyn as a mother?
5. Did Noah believe Hallie killed her friend?
6. When did you first sense there was something unusual about the elderly maid?
7. How would the story have been different if Hallie's destination had been a city such as Duluth or Minneapolis instead of a remote island?
8. Do you believe in ghosts? Have you ever seen a ghost? Do you know anyone who has?
9. Is Hallie's family history unusual, or do most of us have dark secrets in our family's history?
10. When you think about the elements that make a really good mystery, what are they, and to what extent are they used in *The Tale of Halcyon Crane*?



ABOUT WENDY WEBB

Wendy Webb grew up in St. Louis Park. She attended the University of Minnesota, graduating with a degree in political science. During the past 20 years, Wendy has written for most of the major publications in the Twin Cities. She now lives in the gorgeous port city of Duluth with her husband, son, and their dog. Wendy is editor-in-chief of Duluth-Superior Magazine, a lifestyle monthly.



Learn more about the author and her work at www.wendykwebb.com.



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