

PREFACE

I didn't plan this – “this” being a sweeping family saga and trilogy that tackles a number of uncomfortable truths about our great land. Instead, I set out to write an entertaining novel loosely inspired by my father, whose life as a runaway teen and career military man offered great fodder for an adventurous work of fiction. But when I sent my first draft off to the beta readers, the feedback was consistent: I had three books crammed into one, and I was gently prodded into splitting them up.

When I split this into three books, something happened. The story assumed a deeper meaning, one that I have to share. Each character told me to tackle a major societal problem, and that's what I've done. *Forbidden Woman*, as the name implies, dives into the breathtaking ability of our society to teach a woman she is only worth as much as her beauty can earn, while simultaneously shaming her for capitalizing on her, ah, skills. Hopefully, I have done so in a way that is honest, entertaining, and, ultimately, inspirational.

I spent over two years writing this book in the evenings, after work, kids, dogs, dishes, etc. Much of that time was spent researching things like the going rate for a woman in a given year, or when women were allowed to pour a beer in San Antonio. So if I make a religious reference, cite a ridiculous law, or hint at an historical event, you can trust I've got the research to back it up. I even nearly went so far as to use citations and footnotes. Another important thing to note is the relevance of a story set in the early twentieth century to today's society. The astute reader will recognize some obvious parallels, and the book club participant will enjoy figuring out the more subtle hints at a repetition of history.

As *Forbidden Woman* goes to print, I am working on *Running Bull* and *A Warhorse Fallen*, which are the second and third books in this trilogy that tell more about his side of the story, while facing directly the problems of racism and the war economy.

Which brings me to a word to my friends of color. This book uses some disgusting terms that should not even be in our vocabulary. I still struggle seeing those words on paper, but I decided to be as true to the times (1920's – 1950's) as I could, precisely because of the nasty undertones such words convey. It's important to show an America as it was, not a sanitized version, if we want to learn from our history. I apologize for this language, but I want you to know some good has come of it, at least in my family. Several civil rights events are

referenced in *Forbidden Woman* in a few throwaway sentences, but these were mulled for hours at a time and sparked many discussions at the dinner table, often in the same breath as current events. My research into things like the horrific beating of Isaac Woodard and abuse of Claudette Colvin has made me and my children even more aware of just how far white America will go to protect its privilege. I hope we can help blow out the torch of hate.

As I mentioned before, I did not plan this, but it's a story I couldn't not write. I hope you understand.

Blair