

Media Kit

[Production Info](#)

[Author Bio](#)

[Book Bio](#)

[Testimonials](#)

[List of Chapters](#)

[Discussion Questions](#)

[Contact](#)

Author: Dede Montgomery

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Book genres:

History>World>Women in History

Biographies & Memoirs>Historical>United States

Biographies & Memoirs>Specific Groups>Women



Author Bio

Dede Montgomery is a six-generation Oregonian whose family ties have instilled in her a deep connection to the land, and curiosity about life in early Oregon and the stories, good and bad, that lay there.

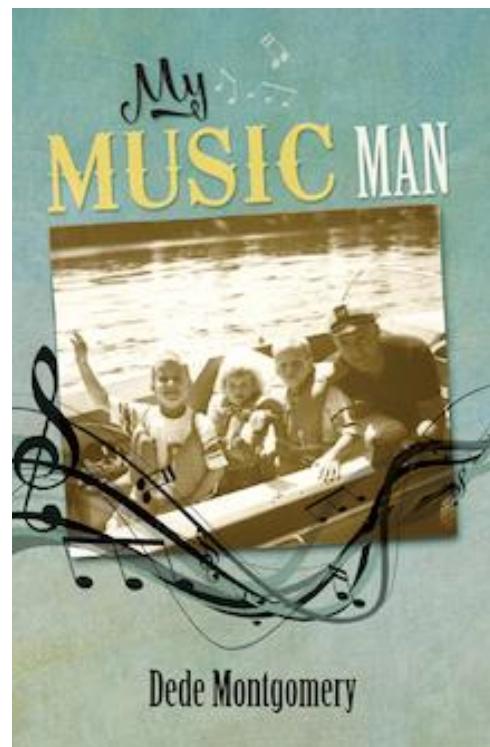
Dede's relatives include two of the earliest Oregon white residents, Chloe Clark and William Willson, who arrived with the Jason Lee Missionaries and founded Willamette University and Salem; J.K. Gill, the early Portland bookseller; Richard G. Montgomery Sr., author of the White-Headed Eagle; and her father, Dick Montgomery, Titan of the Willamette River.

Dede received her BA in Biology at the University of Montana, her MS in Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Washington, and is a Certified Industrial Hygienist working in research at OHSU where she blogs in Oregon and the Workplace. Although a scientist, Dede once began a story about her love of the Willamette while in a creative writing class taught by William Kittredge at UM. In her book, *My Music Man*, Dede explores the jumbled path of forgiveness, reconciliation, courage and gratitude through memories and stories stirred after her dad's death.



Book Bio

The author's dad was a Titan of the Willamette River. *My Music Man* uses stories of seven generations of family living near Oregon's Willamette River to illustrate the power of storytelling. As she moves through grief to accept the death of her dad, these stories shed light on change, acceptance and forgiveness among relationships and of natural landscapes. The reader is catapulted into autumn on the Willamette's riverbank in the 1960's with the author and her four brothers, where they discover their dad's own childhood stories and the intimate relationship he shares with the Willamette River. These memories detail picking berries and filberts, traveling through the West Linn locks by boat, and swimming in the Willamette River on a hot summer day overwhelmed by the smell of blackberry and carp. Tales of generations of family in times of canoes, American Indians and steamboats weave between time periods; held together by the constancy of place. She shares small town life in a school where everyone knows everybody, and how it felt to be an only girl in what often felt like a never-ending sea of boys. The past intersects the present as she shares the recent death of her dad, pushing her into despair at the loss of her story teller, and music maker.



Why we signed My Music Man . . .

It's a narrative of Oregon history through the stories of seven generations of the family. We like learning about early history of Oregon settlement through the eyes of a native Oregonian.

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Testimonials

- *“This book is to be savored. It’s an intimate and heartfelt tribute to a father, to a family, and to a magical childhood on the banks of the Willamette River. Yet it’s much more than a memoir – it’s a multi-generational story, lovingly told, of a family deeply tied to Oregon’s history”* — Amazon reader
- *“This author has captured the essence of our generation. The stories I’ve told my children about my youth and growing up during the same time frame, speak to my own memories of this simpler time....”* —Amazon reader
- *“This is a beautiful memoir that covers much important Northwest history and a poignant personal story. I highly recommend it!”* —Reader
- *“It made me cry so much about losing my dad (same year as yours — 2014) but it also made me smile. And I learned a lot about OR history and the Willamette. Great read!”* —Reader
- *“I didn’t want the book to end!”* —Reader
- *“The love of the river sings through her writing. ”* —Siobhan Taylor, Willamette Falls Heritage interview
- *”..The lyrical description of a seemingly idyllic life growing up on the banks of the Willamette will make you fall in love with Oregon all over again. The author weaves a rich tapestry of multigenerational historical vignettes with her memories of a childhood surrounded by brothers, the river and a father who drinks too much. Scattered throughout are photographs that add enormously to the text, bringing her ancestors to life and enhancing your reading experience. Summer suggestion for you – find your way down to a quiet spot on the river, dip your toes in the Willamette and read this book. You will be transported back in time and to fascinating place.”* —Amazon reader

Chapters

Family Tree

Chapter 1: Lover of Rivers

Chapter 2: Snow and Ice

Chapter 3: Baseball

Chapter 4: Summer

Chapter 5: Heartstrings

Chapter 6: The Falls

Chapter 7: Dangerous Living

Chapter 8: Our Town

Chapter 9: Monkey Wrenching

Chapter 10: Boats, Carp and Steamers

Chapter 11: Pirates

Chapter 12: Girl in a Boys' World

Chapter 13: Champoeg

Chapter 14: Floods, Earthquakes and Volcano

Chapter 15: Chemeketa

Chapter 16: Books

Chapter 17: Interrupted

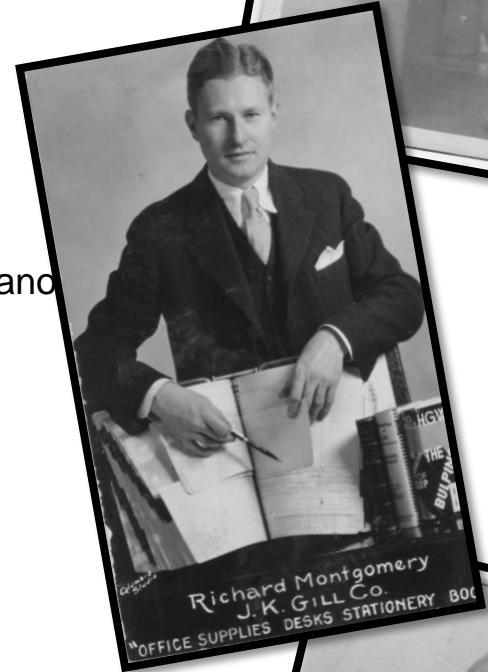
Chapter 18: My Titan

Chapter 19: Watching the River Run

Photos

Afterward: The Writing of this Book

Sources



For Book Groups

1. The author has chosen to build her plot around her personal experiences as a female, including early insights about gender bias and discrimination, and also include experiences of family females of other generations. Do you feel her own experience is common to many U.S. Women? Why or why not? Do you think this represents a specific generation of women?
2. The power of addiction, recovery and reconciliation is also a theme running through this book, particularly presented within the relationship of the narrator and her father. Initially the author didn't intend to include this in the book. Why do you think she chose to add it, and do you think that was helpful to what the book became?
3. The author expresses regret at development of land with the alteration of the natural environment, and yet attempts to share her understanding of the reality of growth. How does this theme strike you as you read the book? Are you sympathetic? Have you had things in your own life that have made you feel similarly or not?

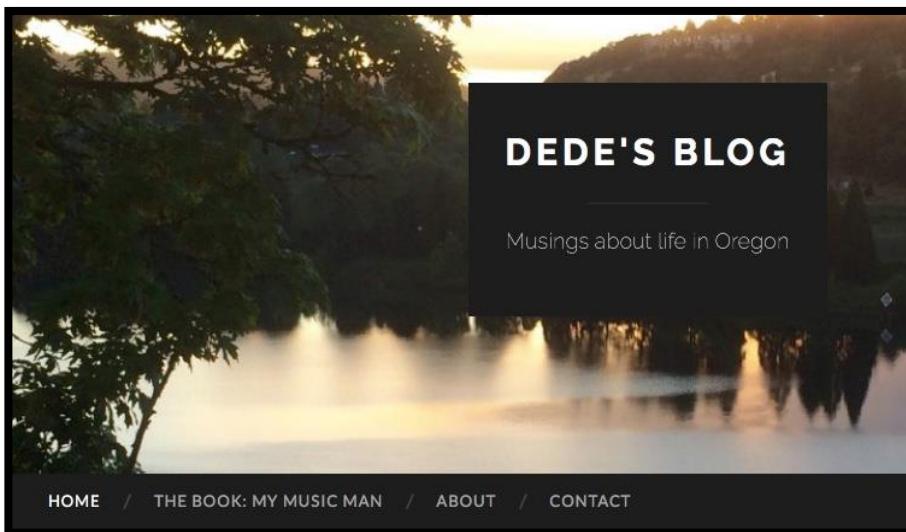


4. For many families, when parents die, the relationships between siblings may change. The author makes a leap by asserting that the power of story helped keep her sibling group together following the death of her dad. Do you buy this? What have you noticed in your own life?
5. The author was challenged to weave multiple generations of stories into her book, including those of her children. Do you think she was effective in doing this? Did you feel that the transitions between time periods was easy to follow?
6. How did this book make you feel about Oregon and its beginnings as related to class, privilege and race? Did you learn anything new? Do you think the author romanticizes early Oregon due to her family roots?
7. Do you know much about your family history? How has it affected you as you move through life? Did this book inspire you to think about something in your own life differently, or take an action on something?

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