

An Interview with Meg Waite Clayton, Author of the Book Club Favorite, *The Wednesday Sisters*

BCC: I know your novel, *The Wednesday Sisters*, is being compared to *The Friday Night Knitting Club*, and is already popular with book clubs. For readers who haven't read it yet, can you tell us a little about it?

MWC: *The Wednesday Sisters* is at its heart a novel about the power of friendship and the great joy of coming to believe in yourself. It opens in 1967 Palo Alto, California—but far from the “Summer of Love” that everyone imagines when you say that. Five women meet in a park while watching their children.

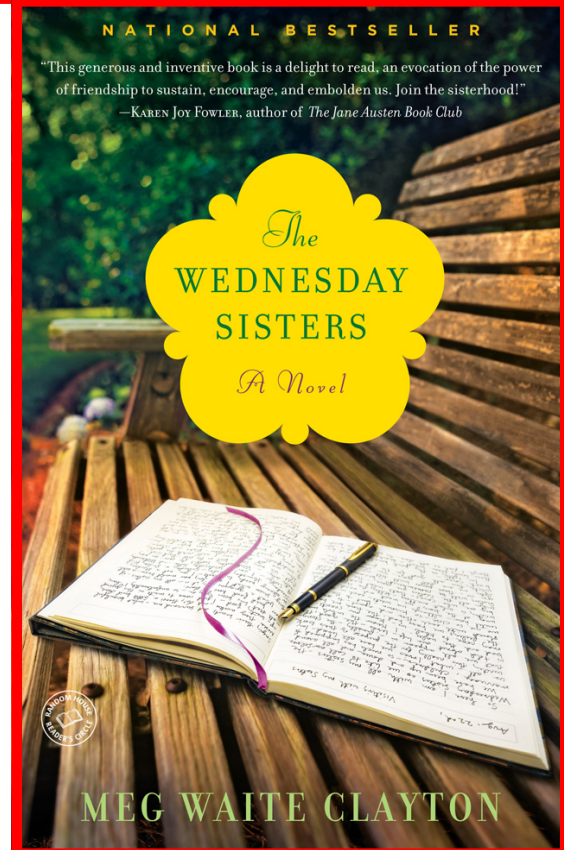
They're home makers and moms and who, when the story opens, define themselves largely by who their husbands are. The five are very different in some ways. Frankie, the narrator, is a timid Midwestern transplant. Brutally blunt Linda is the athlete among them. Kath is a Kentucky debutant with a big ole heart. Ally is quiet and a little secretive, hard to get to know. And Brett is a science-math brain who wears little white gloves with her miniskirts.

But they connect over a shared love of reading: *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Middlemarch*, *Rebecca* and even *Charlotte's Web*. And they bond when they form a writing group together and begin through their writing to think more seriously about who they are.

In the end, the issues the *Wednesday Sisters* face are issues women continue to face today, and probably will for a long time to come. And like best friends through the ages, they carry each other through the bad times, and celebrate together in the good.

BCC: What inspired the story?

MWC: I hate to talk about inspiration, because for folks who want to write but aren't sure where to start, it leaves the impression that you have to have a lightning-bolt moment to get started, when the fact is you just sit down and face the blank page and see what comes. That having been said, the emotional core of the novel is drawn from three friendships of mine in particular: with Jenn Belt DuChene, with my husband, Mac Clayton, and with my long-term writing pal, Brenda Rickman Vantrease.



Brenda will tell you she's a Tuesday Sister—the day our Nashville writing group met. Jenn doesn't write, but she's been my best friend since she finagled a room for us together in law school, when we were supposed to be next door neighbors. She is probably singlehandedly responsible for me being able to laugh at myself. And Mac picked up where Jenn left off. ("Two Wednesday Sisters and One Husband" though? Not such a great title, right?) This book is definitely meant to be a hallelujah to them.

The bond between Linda, Kath, Ally, Frankie, and Brett was also inspired by my mom and the friends she has had over the years. I grew up running around the neighborhoods we lived in with the neighborhood kids while my mom and her friends sat at picnic tables playing bridge or visiting as they kept an eye on us. And I know – although only in retrospect – how much they helped each other through. And still do.

BCC: How did you start writing?

*MWC: Growing up (isn't that where all dreams start?), I was a huge reader. I dreamed of writing books like *A Wrinkle in Time*. But I thought writing novels meant being able to leaping tall literary buildings in single bounds. The adults I knew were businessmen—not even business women; the "ladies" were moms and teachers and nuns. Even a girl going to law school was a stretch. My husband, Mac, was the first adult to whom I admitted my childhood aspirations to write, and he gave me a great big push. He said, basically, "Your dream, Meg. How will you ever know unless you try?"*

So I just started putting pen to paper, reading more and deconstructing what I read, trying to learn how to write. Which I'm still doing!

BCC: Do you belong to a book club yourself?

MWC: My neighborhood book group has been meeting one Wednesday evening each month, more or less, since January of 2004. The funny thing is that we didn't know each other for the most part when we first started: someone just had the idea that a book group would be a fun way to connect us to our neighbors. The word spread, and now we count more than twenty members—and friends!



I also attend book groups at two local bookstores: the Kepler's Fiction Book Club, and Margie's 4th Tuesday Book Club at Books Inc. Palo Alto. They're both great groups that

always manage to generate interesting discussions, and they broaden my reading horizons, too.

BCC: Do you visit other clubs?



MWC: One of the most rewarding things I'm doing as an author is visiting book clubs. As an author, finding you are connecting with readers through your writing is really special. Being able to connect with them in person as well... well, that's heaven.

For folks geographically near to me (I live in Palo Alto, CA), I often visit in person. For folks further afield, a phone conversation is nearly as fun. The feedback has been so terrific that I've added a 'What Book Clubs are Saying' page to my website that includes photos of some of the groups I've visited. My favorite is the photo where I'm represented by the phone. Any book groups interested in chatting about The Wednesday Sisters can contact me through that page.

BCC: Are there other resources for book groups on you website?

MWC: I have a whole set of links for book clubs on my site, which includes information on how much of the history in the book is real (short answer: all of it); pages with personal photos that talk about where each of Kath, Linda, Ally, Brett and Frankie comes from; a video interview, a reading group guide and much more.

BCC: What can readers look forward to next?

MWC: I'm working on a new novel, The Ms Bradwells, which Ballantine will also publish, though I have to get it written first. It's again about friends—this time four friends who first met in law school coming together years later. Since I'm not yet to the end of the first draft, I'm not quite sure how to describe it beyond that, except to say that I expect it will end on a note of hope, like The Wednesday Sisters does.

Thank you , Meg!

The Wednesday Sisters releases in paperback on May 5—just in time for your book club to pick up their copies! Please check out Meg's website for great book club discussion resources: www.megwaiteclayton.com.

BCC

