Clarion Review

Historical

A Healing Place
Joyce Shaughnessy
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Three Stars (out of Five)

During the Great Depression poverty was a nearly universal condition. Families broke apart as fathers and husbands left home to look for work, and women struggled to manage households with no income and no resources. The economy did not recover until World War II, and so the hardship of poverty was replaced with the fears of a world at war. In *A Healing Place*, Joyce Shaughnessy tells the story of one American family living through these difficult periods.

Amos and Molly Miller began their lives together on a farm in Oklahoma. Hit by both drought and the Great Depression, they could not continue payments on their bank loan, and so they lost their home. With their three young daughters and a few possessions in the back of a truck they set off in search of work. In Texon, Texas, a small oil-field community, Amos finds a decent job and the family settles down to rebuild their life.

Just a few short years later the United States joins WWII and the Miller's new son-in-law is shipped off to the Philippines, only to become a POW in the camp known as Cabanatuan. Through all of their struggles, the Miller's stand strong, living their lives with faith and decency and a will to survive.

A Healing Place is an interesting book with a message about the importance of faith and community in the face of tragedy. The Miller's try to be decent Christians and good neighbors no matter what life throws their way. The book, however, has couple of major plot points that do not make sense. First of all, the family loses their home to the bank because they cannot come up with $130. They proceed to sell their belongings for $150 and with $50 more they leave their farm to find a new life. Why they cannot use the $200 to keep the farm is never adequately explained. Secondly, a gas station attendant tells them about Texon stating, "I heard some bad stories about the oil field camps too, so be careful. There's one that everyone would like to find though, and its called Texon, Texas. It's built with real houses, indoor toilets, and they treat their

workers like human beings." When the family arrives in Texon, Amos is quickly offered a job despite the fact that this seems to be a rare and wonderful opportunity. No mention is made of other job seekers to compete with.

Ultimately, the history in the book is interesting but the story is not developed well enough to make it thoroughly enjoyable. Although Shaughnessy describes the horrible conditions through which the Miller family suffers, she shares very little of their day-to-day lives. Consequently, the book lacks emotion and the characters are not developed enough to bring the history to life.

Catherine Thureson