

Circle Way: A Daughter's Memoir, a Writer's Journey Home

Mary Ann Hogan

Eric Newton

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"To what degree does family mean destiny?" Mary Ann Hogan asks. A fourth-generation Californian, she followed in her father Bill's footsteps as a local journalist. Blending his work with her own prose, *Circle Way* is a delicate, searching memoir.

Bill Hogan was the literary editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* for twenty-seven years. During his tenure, he interviewed James Baldwin, lunched with Truman Capote, and was on the Pulitzer Prize judging panel the year that Annie Dillard won. But he never published his own autobiographical sketches, as William Saroyan urged him to. In between her thoughts on her family history, writing, and Florida versus California life, Hogan presents a selection of Bill's artwork and excerpts from notebooks found in his studio.

Collage-like, the book is rich in song lyrics and wordplay as well as family anecdotes. It reaches back to reflect on a Catholic upbringing; zeroes in on Hogan's son's time in the ICU at birth and preparation for a Florida hurricane; and comes full circle as Hogan returns to California and becomes a weekly columnist for a small newspaper.

Hogan seeks to situate herself in relation to her great-great-grandfather, who emigrated from Ireland during the potato famine, and to her great-uncle Howard, who was sent to San Quentin for killing two people while driving drunk. She dwells on the paradox that a sentence that might have destroyed Howard was in fact "the best thing that could have happened to him," spurring him to set up a medical practice.

A greater irony remains here: Hogan didn't live to see this long-gestating book completed; she died of lymphoma in 2019. Her widower, Eric Newton, edited the work and provides the foreword and final chapter.

Tender and lyrical, *Circle Way* is a multilayered story of family and fate that focuses on a father-daughter pair of writers.

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