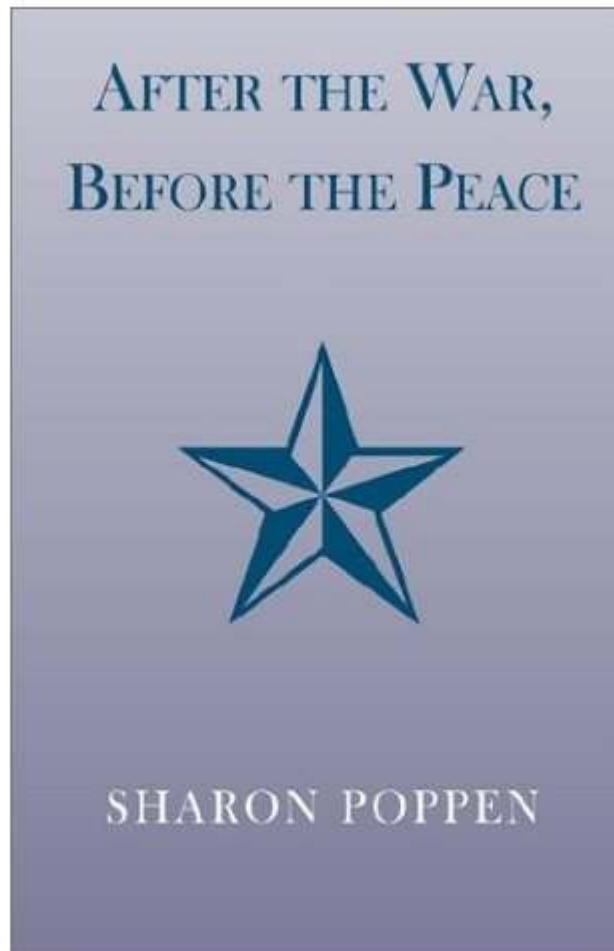


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BOOK SUMMARY

After the War, Before the Peace

Follow four South Carolina brothers, post Civil War, attempting to avenge atrocities done under the guise of war. The saga takes them on a journey to manhood, love and peace with respectability. The story begins as Michael joins his older brothers. In a border town, Michael meets Lita. Despite being sold by her father into a brothel, she guards her body ferociously. She shocks everyone when she throws herself at Michael. Oldest brother Jim works at balancing life on the run with a family living with his mother. A raid unites them with Yankees who are trying to right the wrongs perpetrated on southerner veterans. Youngest brother Danny loves Deborah, a hometown girl who is a born flirt, anxious for adventure. Danny becomes her dupe in escaping their small town. The rogue Yankee soldier that raped their mother is found. Do they become revengers and commit a murder? Surprisingly, it's Danny's logic that leads the brothers in their dilemma. Danny's daughter is born to a terrified wife who ignores her child. The birth plants seeds of concern in Michael about Lita's ability to bear children. Deborah, left alone for months at a time, finds excitement with a gang of cattle rustlers. She is introduced to sexual escapades she never dreamed existed, but finds she doesn't want to live without. The family is brought to Mexico while they petition for an amnesty for their lawless activities. Having the entire family together acerbates Michael's concerns. He worries about how Lita's culture and religion will be accepted in the United States. After the brothers risk a trip to Washington, do they get their amnesty? Does Deborah abandon her family? Does Michael throw away a legendary love? Read *After the War, Before the Peace* to find out. Reader comments include "Has a Gone With the Wind flavor", "Reminiscent of *The Thornbirds*" and "Another *Lonesome Dove*."

BOOK EXCERPT

On their way back to Mexico, tragedy struck. They'd suffered a driving rain for a couple of days and were now in a particularly rocky area along the banks of the Brazos River. A gravelly beach next to a flood-gorged ravine and a small copse of cottonwood trees offered shelter too good to pass up.

Jim found a little cave among the rocks and was attempting to light a fire to make some coffee and hot food. Joe and Michael were tending to the horses and bringing their bedrolls in from the rain. Thunder and lightning added to their misery. Talking was impossible in the torrent. One of the horses had wandered off after being unloaded. Once they had secured the others and their gear, Michael set off to find the stray. She wouldn't go far in this weather.

Jim was taking his first sip of something warm in two days and Joe was about to remove his poncho when they heard the distinctive crack.

"That wasn't thunder!" Jim looked at Joe.

"Shit!"

Through the driving rain, they headed in the direction Michael had taken. They crept through the trees. A horse whinnied. In unison, the brothers veered in the direction of the sound. A bolt of lightning pierced the sky and gave the brothers a clear and horrible view down into the half-filled ravine.

Michael lay sprawled face down on its muddy wall. His legs, up to his thighs, were in the running water while the top of his body was motionless in the mud. There was an ominous dark stain just below his right shoulder.

Two men on horseback were leading the stray horse down the ravine toward the river. One was wearing Michael's poncho and hat. The other carried Michael's rifle. The brothers raced along the ravine until they were directly above them.

Jim yelled, "Stop!" and fired a warning shot into the water directly in front of them. The men turned and shot back toward the demanding voice.

"I said stop or you're dead."

It was now pitch dark, neither pair could see the other, but the men in the ditch fired wildly.

"Stop or we'll shoot to kill." Jim warned again.

"Fuck you!" A bolt of lightning pierced the sky as shots were exchanged.

"You ok?"

"Yeah, you?" came Joe's response.

Another bolt of lightning showed the two men laying face down, floating in the water.

"Shit. You go back to Mike while I check out these bastards."

"Not alone you're not." Joe was already scrambling down the ravine wall watching for movement from the floating bodies. He stood in the thigh deep water, grabbed one of the men's boots and pulled him up on the muddy wall of the ravine. He touched his neck. The man was dead.

Jim pulled the other man up next to his pal. This one was gurgling, trying to speak or cough. Abruptly, he jerked and was dead. The brothers turned and raced back to Michael. He had not moved. They knelt on either side of him as Jim felt for a pulse. "Strong!" he yelled to Joe over the rain. "Let's get him back to the cave."

REVIEWS

In *After the War, Before the Peace*, Sharon Poppen has created a cast of rich characters comprised of the Farrells, a Confederate family still suffering the effects of the Civil War after which Union soldiers destroyed their plantation and raped their mother.

Mentally ravaged by these events, the father and oldest sons seek to avenge their losses, recover their stolen properties and gain reparation in their own way. Against the wishes of their matriarch, Elizabeth, they continue their quest until all of the sons are embroiled in the legacy, their women are left behind to raise families and maintain faith and unity and their youths are ill-spent. On the run as outlaws, they seek refuge across the border in Mexico where they love, live and suffer great human losses.

With the help of a supportive and remorseful Union soldier, they work tirelessly for to convince the U.S. government to grant amnesty to themselves and all those Confederate soldiers who have taken a similar path. Set primarily in the Midwest and Mexico, this book is a vividly drawn adventure, rife with lust, violence and the kind of family love and bond that seems now lost to a time passed.

Poppen has created a story the reader will not soon forget. Her women are tough and her men tougher. Yet they are steeped in the kind of love and loyalty that makes for a great read and a cast of characters one hopes might reappear in another life in another adventure-filled book someday.

~ Denise Cassino, author and editor

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sharon Ann Greene Poppen grew up in Chicago, Illinois in the 1950's. She is a current resident of Lake Havasu City, AZ and has lived in California and New Mexico over the years. Along the way, she married and raised a son and daughter. A second marriage brought three stepchildren. After years in the telecommunications business, Sharon retired to Arizona and earned an AA in English from the Mohave Community College and is now enrolled in Northern Arizona University working on her BA. In her spare time, she writes and dotes on her five grandchildren. Sharon's short stories and poetry has been published in several literary publications. Her work has also received recognition from such prestigious organizations as the Arizona Authors Association where she was awarded a Second Prize in fiction for her unpublished novel Abby and the National League of American Pen Women with an Honorable Mention for her short story A Walk in the Desert. Sharon is currently a member of the Lake Havasu City Writer's Group and the Society of Southwestern Authors in Tucson, AZ. Her goals are to write, everyday. To publish, as often as possible. To enjoy life, every moment.