

Baby Boomer Woman: Linda Ballou **by Anne Holmes on September 13, 2010**

**The Voices of Baby Boomer Women Blog for the
National Association of Baby Boomer Women**

Welcome to NABBW member and adventure travel writer Linda Ballou, who calls Haines, Alaska her hometown. I find that intriguing, since Linda's debut novel, *Wai-nani, High Chiefess of Hawaii-Her Epic Journey* grew out of her long-standing love affair with the Hawaiian Islands. Fire and ice, she's seen it all!

These days she bases in Los Angeles, where she has just published her second book, *Lost Angel Walkabout-One Traveler's Tales*. This collection of short travel stories will fill you with thrills, chills, giggles, squeaks — and the desire to get yourself in great physical shape so you can join her for the next trek...

Using one paragraph, tell us a bit about yourself. Tell us about your family; married, divorced, children, grands, boomerangs or parents living with you, etc.



I was married briefly from 21-23 to the wrong person. Presently, I live in Los Angeles with my life partner of the last 25 years. We chose not to have children and not to get married. Ours is a relationship based on love, trust and mutual respect and one that neither of us takes for granted.

We enjoy an adult lifestyle that allows for a good deal of personal freedom.

My parents migrated to Alaska when I was thirteen. This move isolated me from my many relatives in the lower 48. My writing has

served to re-connect me with my extended family, a benefit I had not considered when I began the journey. I still call Haines, Alaska, where my nuclear family has lived for fifty years, my home town.

What is your favorite childhood memory that is reminiscent of growing up in the 50s, 60s or 70s?

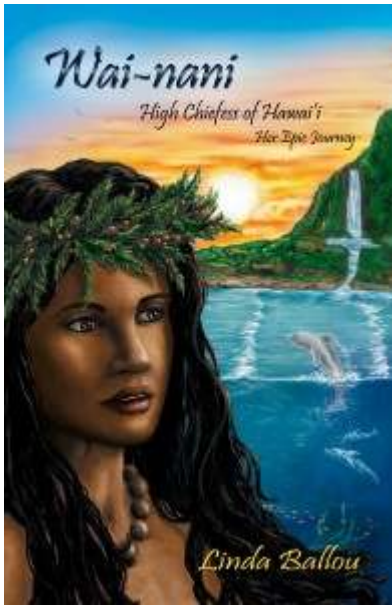
I think the incident that is most emblematic of my childhood happened the day that John F. Kennedy was shot. At the time I was living in Haines, a city of 2,000 with no radio or television. The townspeople rigged up antennae that allowed us to get reception at the school gym so we could view the president's memorial parade.

We all gathered in stunned, frightened silence around the black and white screen and watched what was happening in the outside world that seemed so far away from us.

The separation I experienced in Alaska served as a buffer to the sadness in the world, caused me to be different from my media driven peers and grounded me in nature. I walked for many hours on the misty shores of the Lynn Canal in introspective moods that eventually brought me to writing. What qualities do you have that speak of our generation of women? We are the first generation to have the choice to have children, or not to have children. I think the birth control pill was single most liberating component of my generation. I made the conscious decision to strive for self-actualization—that is to live up to my fullest potential as an artist and human being.

Blessed with what is being called the “Golden Age of America”, in terms of the economic history of our country, I was able obtain a degree in English Literature and subsequently to take a year off to consider my future before entering the work force in earnest.

I chose the north shore of Kauai to be my thinking place. It was there that I experienced a spiritual awakening and met Ka'ahumanu, the inspiration of my historical novel, *Wai-nani, High Chiefess of Hawaii*. She was a childless chiefess who remained the confident and favorite wife of Kamehameha the Great for forty years.



She was also a “healing kumu” dubbed the “Loving Mother of the People.” She remained true to herself, including her sexual appetites, even upon the threat of death. She was a wonderful surfer and reputedly swam 18 miles a day in her youth.

When Kamehameha died he made her the most powerful woman in old Hawai'i. She used this power to put an end to the 2,000 year old Polynesian kapu system that called for human sacrifice.

WOW... as in “What a Woman “is all I can say! She was independent, brave, athletic, compassionate, and caring for those who were less fortunate. These are qualities I hope people see in me and others of my generation. What inspires you?

The infinite variety found in nature. Beauty wherever I find it– be it in a landscape, a painting, a song, or the smile of a child.

What brings you the most pleasure in midlife?

All the things that have brought me pleasure in years gone by. Yoga on the beach, the touch of my lover's hand, the satisfaction received from a job well done, self-expression through my writing, and working in my garden. As a child of the '60s you must know “The dance is all there is.”

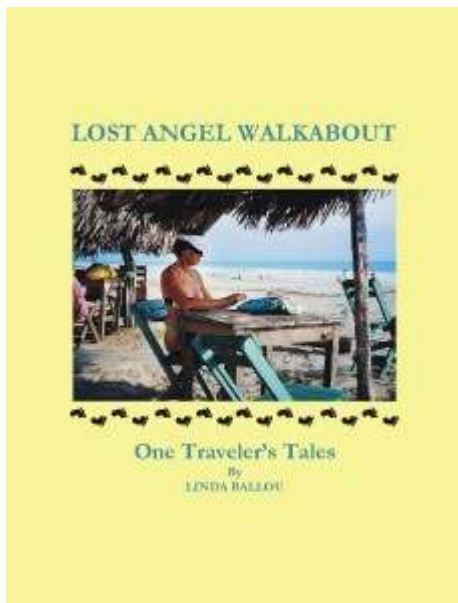
Do you have any interesting hobbies?

Someone told me to make my hobbies my life work. That is sort of the same advice given by the 12th century master Rumi, “Be what you love.” That is what I strive to do.

Do you have a favorite book or movie? If so, tell us why it's your favorite. Walkabout is a movie I saw about 30 years ago that stuck with me. It is about a young aborigine man who goes on a pilgrimage through the Australian outback. This movie is worth watching just for the incredible cinematography, but the story is mythic.

The boy's innocence is stolen by a white woman. He dances to his death in an attempt to woo her back to him. The destruction of indigenous cultures by supposedly superior Europeans can be witnessed in history all over the globe. This fact saddens me greatly.

Do you travel and if so, who are your favorite travel partners and where do you like to go?



I am an adventure travel writer. I love to go with an outfitter that takes care of my creature comforts and allows me to just go along for an exciting ride. River rafting though roadless, wilderness areas gives me boundless pleasure.

I absolutely adore being on the back of a good horse and riding through gorgeous country. I hike trails endlessly and am fully engaged when I am in the state of exploration. I love nature so much I will wash windows to get outdoors on a beautiful spring day.

Do you practice preventive medicine? Please elaborate.

Yes. I have been practicing yoga all of my adult life. I was introduced to what I consider to be my saving grace in a too hectic world, by a Rabbi at a YWCA class when I was 18. I walk, swim, hike, or do yoga every day. This physical act is capped off with a twenty minute meditation session.

I also get a therapeutic massage every 6 weeks to reward hard working muscles for serving me well. I promised my body that if it would heal and allow me to enjoy life once more, I would take greater care of it and do things that support good health that include a better diet.

As a result, I don't take any drugs and I feel great.

What do you stress about?

The greatest pressure I feel now is the need to maintain my fitness level so that I can continue to enjoy outdoor adventures. I still have a lot of active holidays in hard to get to places on my bucket list. I see a great decade ahead if I can just stay healthy.

Is it important for you to retain your youthful looks, and if so, to what degree are you willing to go?

The secret to youth is to fill your mind with beauty. This will not make you look younger, but it will keep you energized and excited about life. Greater minds than mine have come to this conclusion.

If you read John O-Donohue's book, *The Invisible Embrace of Beauty*, you will be convinced of this truism.

The other secret to a happy life is to be fully engaged in what you are doing. This thought is examined deeply by Phil Cousineau in *Stoking the Creative Fires*.

I think your physical appearance has little to do with true happiness. I plan to age gracefully without any corrective surgery.

Have you re-invented yourself, and if so, how?

Yes. When I was 47 I was diagnosed with a herniated disc that took me to my knees in mind-bending pain. At that time, I was thoroughly invested in the equestrian world and deep into my second childhood. It was nothing short of heartbreaking for me to have to give up my mare and riding at an expert level.

But, I dealt with it by writing a novel called *The Cowgirl Who Jumped over the Moon* while standing up to type as it was too painful to sit. I got through that awful time and eventually was able to lead a normal life again. I decided to combine my writing skill with my love of horses to fulfill my desire to travel. I queried a guest ranch in Colorado and got my first travel writing gig! I've been having great fun as a travel writer ever since.

Do you plan to retire?

For thirty years I have supported my eating habit by selling real estate in Southern California. Real Estate has afforded me a comfortable lifetime, a good deal of personal freedom, and I have met many wonderful people. Still, I hope to retire out of real estate into a full time writing career spiced with wonderful travel adventures.

Are you doing anything to GO Green?

Both of my books are with print on demand publishers. That means nothing goes to waste. No garage full of books made from trees that didn't need to die. They are also available on Amazon's electronic format for their Kindle Reader and I am working to get them on iPad.

I personally live in a modestly-sized home with properly sealed windows and energy efficient appliances. I drive a fuel efficient car and try to walk softly on the planet.

Can you pinpoint major turning points in your life that led to your life's work/play at midlife?

My year on Kauai changed me forever. I did Tai Chi on the beach, was introduced to other forms of meditation and got in touch with people who led lives that were not based on material things.

Some of them were Hawaiian, but many of them were drop outs from a world spinning on consumerism. Hawai'i remains a source of sustenance for me when my soul cries tired.

I wrote a piece called “Midlife Rehab” that takes readers through the steps to transformation that I took when coming back from my back injury. I submitted it to you and hope to see on your site. I think it will help anyone see themselves more clearly and to make those decisions they need to make to carry on after a large setback.

Do you still have unfulfilled dreams, and are you doing anything to accomplish them?

I am experiencing a good harvest. Self-actualization through my writing and on other levels as well feels wonderful. I see myself as a “booming boomer.” I feel empowered and energized for more success.

I have hired a virtual assistant to remove the sense of being over-whelmed by the thought of what I am not getting done. My largest pressure now is keeping myself fit enough to maintain cruising altitude

How do you make a difference in the lives of others, your community, your world?

One of the greatest rewards I have received from my writing was the day that a man told me I had saved his life! One of my first published pieces was an article called “The Art of Falling.” In the equestrian world trainers tell you that you will fall, but they don’t tell you how to prevent injury. This man had read my article about how to mentally prepare for a fall and to maneuver away from injury. He had internalized what I had written and when he did have a fall he knew what to do. I felt very gratified to know that my work had served this man so well.

My writing ability also serves to raise the awareness of others about the many environmental travesties taking place about the globe. One article I wrote called “When the Whales Stop Singing it will be Forever” lets people know that the U.S. Navy, and other navies, continues to use levels of sonic sounding in the oceans that causes whales ears to hemorrhage.

The unimaginable pain forces these helpless creatures to heave themselves onto the shore to get away from the piercing sounds. The Supreme Court

ruled in December 2009 that homeland security trumps the environmental laws in place to protect marine mammals.

Who has had the biggest influence on your life and why?

My Aunt Marion was a self-educated, independent, self-supporting woman who was ahead of her time. She lived in San Francisco in her little blue house that she bought long before she married a doctor who took her globetrotting on lecture tours. She was never abrasive towards those who dubbed her an old maid because she chose to remain single and independent until she was 45.

She served as a role model for me before women in my generation were burning their bras. Many of her beliefs were different from my own, but that did not mean we could not be the best of friends. I miss her physical presence in my life, but her bright spirit still serves as a shining light for me. If you were to have a personal mission statement, what would it be? Feel free to be as serious or fun as you choose.

My stated mission is to get to as many beautiful places on the big blue that I can before they are gone. As a travel writer I have become increasingly aware of the pressing environmental problems on our planet.

At first, I simply wanted to see the diversity and grandeur of Mother Nature's handiwork, but now I approach it with a greater urgency. When appropriate, I use the power of my pen to help reverse these trends.

I walk in beauty on the good red road.

Linda Ballou
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