

# Reader Views

Book reviews, for readers, by readers.

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## Interview with Gary Pisarski Author of *Black River Crossing*

Reader Views would like to welcome Gary Pisarski, author of “Black River Crossing,” a new historical fiction set in the Civil War era.

**Juanita:** Thank you for talking with us today Gary. Please give us an idea of the storyline in “Black River Crossing.”

**Gary:** A young unmarried couple, Carol Ann and Will, survive the horror of the Civil War and its aftermath. Sweethearts before the war, they move westward to escape the hopelessness of a South Carolina in despair. For Carol Ann, the journey leads her to a new life at the Double-M ranch in Texas, spanning a period of eleven years until everything she has found is threatened as a result of the Black River crossing.

**Juanita:** What is the underlying theme of your book?

**Gary:** My interest is the human experience and although Carol Ann is the central character, this is a story of several other characters as well and their intertwining relationships. At any point in time, we all react to one another and in crisis situations based on what has happened in our lives previously. That is the basis of the actions taken by the key characters in the book in the final scenes of *Black River Crossing*.

**Juanita:** Give us a little insight into the hearts and minds of the leading characters.

**Gary:** I believe that the relationship between an author and his or her characters is like that of a parent and children. The characters we create and the children we raise take the values we have tried to mold into their beings. And like the parent letting go as their child leaves home for the world outside the family unit, the characters in a book come to life in their new relationship with the reader. Carol Ann is a strong, kind, and loving young woman who in the beginning of the book has lost the people who were the center of her life. Like Will, she has a good heart, and as such they don't always recognize the deception of others that eventually separates their lives. Agnes is a woman who like Carol Ann, once left her home at an early age looking for a better life, but fate led on a different journey. And when the two women meet, Agnes is driven by her own desires for her son.

**Juanita:** What is Carol Ann’s message to your readers?

**Gary:** Life does not always turn out as youth dreams it will be and we cannot hold on physically to the people we meet early in our lives. Carol Ann’s strength was her ability to accept life knowing that memories are nourishing while regrets are bitter.

**Juanita:** What does “Black River Crossing” suggest to us about ‘fate’?

**Gary:** The people that touch us in different periods of our lives, family, friends, and loves, stay in the heart and are treasured in the mind forever. Fate cannot take us back in time to relive the past, but what we all carry from the past determines how we respond to the challenges brought by fate.

**Juanita:** What are some of the similarities that people face today in comparison to the era of the Civil War?

**Gary:** Human emotions are the same. In a way, as back then, people and icebergs are alike in that both only show a fraction of what lies beneath. People interact with one another every day, but never have the insight into the depth of each other’s feelings and experiences that drives how we interact. I don’t believe that has changed; though society in the era of and in the aftermath of the Civil War has changed significantly from the society of today, and those society changes impacts how we interact with one another.

**Juanita:** I know you are a Civil War buff, but tell us about the research you did in preparation for writing “Black River Crossing?”

**Gary:** Actually, I’m not a Civil War buff at all. The story ideas as well as the emotions of the characters were the primary conceptions developed first. I felt that that the Civil War and the period that followed best suited the story that I wished to tell. I enjoy American History, but have always been left with a desire to understand how the different periods of time affected the emotions and the thoughts of those people living those various times. For me, the post Civil War period provided a chance to bring together people impacted by varied experiences of the era.

**Juanita:** So many people headed west during that time. What was the ‘promise of Texas’ for the many that traveled so far, undertaking such insurmountable challenges?

**Gary:** Escape and a migration towards hope, and at that period in our history, the West was a vast, open area that provided that hope.

**Juanita:** What inspired you to write “Black River Crossing,” your first novel?

**Gary:** I had roughed out five storylines, one of which led to this story. My wife’s sister, Carol, died at the age of twenty and my wife has often wondered aloud what Carol’s life would have been like had she not passed at such an early age. That was the inspiration to build the story around Carol Ann as the main character, who at the beginning of the book is that same age.

**Juanita:** Do you have plans to write another book?

**Gary:** I have finished a second work of fiction, set in modern day Chicago, the city in which I was born and raised. I have a rough outline for a 3<sup>rd</sup> as well.

**Juanita:** Gary, thank you for talking with us today. We will be watching for your upcoming books, and wish you all the best. How can your readers get more information about you and your endeavors, and do you have any last thoughts for us today?

**Gary:** The website is [www.GaryPisarski.npauthors.com](http://www.GaryPisarski.npauthors.com), which can be accessed directly or through [www.nightengalepress.com](http://www.nightengalepress.com). Thank you for this opportunity. I hope those readers who open the cover of this book will enjoy both the story and the characters they meet along the way.