

Mississippi Flyway

Nel Rand

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Reviewed by Cherie Fisher for Reader Views (9/06)

First time novelist Nel Rand hits a home run with “Mississippi Flyway”. The book caught my attention from the first page and kept it right through to the last page. It is rich with Southern culture and adventures along the Mississippi Flyway (the path along the Mississippi River that birds fly each season). I honestly felt like I was part of the adventure riding in the Bunny Bread truck with Ellie Moon and her Dad, the not so “Tiny” Moon. I also completely related to Ellie’s early life as a young Catholic child brought up on a diet of good ole’ Catholic guilt!

The story begins with scenes from Ellie’s childhood and the traumatic experiences she endures that eventually lead to repressed memories. Ellie’s early experiences, full of abuse, addiction and the early death of her sister Rose, set her up for a lonely and empty life as an adult.

Move forward to Saint Louis in 1967 where Ellie is an unemployed, recently divorced 31 year old still being incessantly nagged by her mother and you have a woman who is definitely ripe for an adventure. That’s where her wanderer father, a notorious gambler and conman, walks in after 20 years and offers to take Ellie on a road trip. She quickly accepts and begins the adventure of a lifetime.

The adventures for Ellie happen on two levels – the trip where her father is being pursued by the nasty piece of work Sheriff Dover and the internal struggles that she has with her subconscious to remember what happened to her as a child. I experienced a real sense of the South as it was in 1967 as Ellie and Tiny are pursued by Dover to Kentucky and gambling at Miss Ludine’s, onto the backwaters of the Mississippi to an illegal moonshine distillery, to the wild eating contest in colorful Memphis, concluding with a Voodoo ceremony in New Orleans. All through this, Ellie is struggling with her feelings about Tiny’s abandonment when she was a child, her sister Rose’s death 10 years earlier and the memories that are starting to resurface. She realizes that it’s okay to let them out now because she is strong enough to deal with it, and that she must face them to move on with her life. “Mississippi Flyway” ends with Ellie learning just how much compassion and forgiveness she is capable of.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and highly recommend it to anyone looking for a great weekend read. But be forewarned, don’t pick this up before bedtime and expect to go to sleep early.