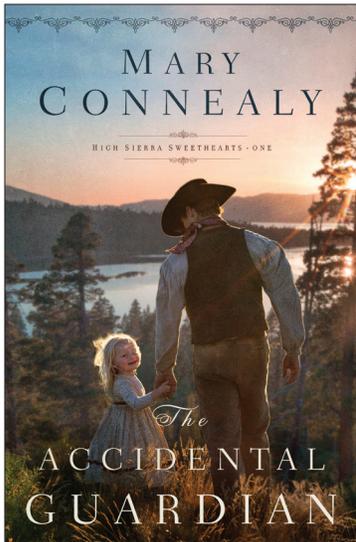




**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH MARY CONNEALY**



**The Accidental Guardian**

HIGH SIERRA SWEETHEARTS #1

by Mary Connealy

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**1. What was the seed of the idea for *The Accidental Guardian*?**

I was trying to imagine life completely alone in the wilderness. That was the first thing that I was dancing around in my head. The loneliness, the skills necessary to survive, the harsh winter up in the high mountains—very close to the mountains that killed so many of the Donner Party. What kind of kid could survive that? What would it be like? How would it change you?

**2. Why did you choose the location near Lake Tahoe and the High Sierra Mountains?**

I wanted a place that was strikingly beautiful and brutally harsh. That combination. The tug between the lure of the beauty and the fear of the conditions. I've wanted to use Lake Tahoe for a while until finally the book idea and the location meshed in the HIGH SIERRA SWEETHEARTS series.

**3. Your heroine ran a newspaper back east. Few women had a job in the era where you set the novel. Deb had worked for her father for years with no thanks from him and no respect from the men she did business with. She was considered an errand girl even as she ran the whole paper. Now she wants to work for herself. Could she have made it in San Francisco running a newspaper?**

The American Frontier and the West were wide open places. There were still plenty of restrictions put on women in the nineteenth century when it came to women holding a job (if you don't count years of backbreaking work running a house, bearing and raising children, and doing plenty of farm chores as a job!), but things were less restrictive out west. I think Deb could have made it running a newspaper, although she would have had to be tough. And she might have needed to put aside love, marriage and children for years while she established herself. That's what she wanted. And then a kind man who appreciated her for all her hard work and skill turned her aside from that path.

**4. Could a cabin really be built as fast as Trace and his cowhands put up the new log house?**

I think the reality of building a log cabin is mind-boggling. Just think of all those corners you need to cut out like the corners of Lincoln Logs. That would be hard, tedious, and for sure time-consuming. But I remembered that Pa Ingalls in the *Little House on the Prairie* books got the raw cabin up in a couple of weeks single-handedly. So I used that as proof that three hardworking men could do the same pretty fast. It's so strange to think of building a house with no money, yet there were plenty of logs in the woods, and no land to have to buy—although Trace had homesteaded, so he did own the land. Just do the work then, and you've got a house.

**5. How long until book #2?**

The sequel to *The Accidental Guardian* is *The Reluctant Warrior*, which releases in October 2018 and is available for preorder already. And then be on the lookout for book #3, *The Unexpected Champion*, coming in 2019.

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