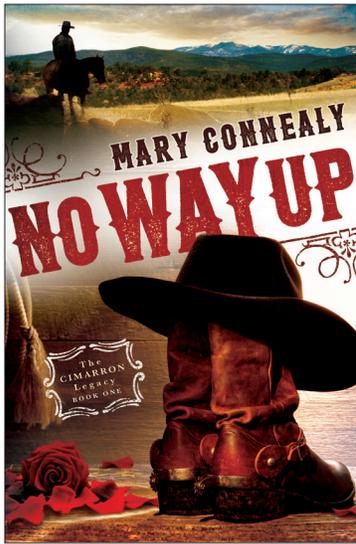




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH MARY CONNEALY



No Way Up

THE CIMARRON LEGACY #1
by Mary Connealy

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1. What gave you the idea for the CIMARRON LEGACY series?

This idea came out of the story of Jacob and Esau. One of my most fundamental impulses when I write is creating a loving family. I often write about sisters and brothers, and keeping them close is as important to me as keeping my own children close to me and to each other. So I've always regretted Isaac and Rebekah's behavior toward their sons. They both clearly chose a favorite and maneuvered things to give the favorite advantages. I just can't quite see a parent doing that and yet I've personally known some parents who did this, so it does happen.

Jacob and Esau are very different men. One is an outdoors guy who works with his back, while the other keeps to the house, but his hard work comes in another form. Animosity between them is to be expected, yet if the parents were soothing troubled waters instead of stirring things up, these two may have gotten along.

What if Isaac and Rebekah had poured all their energy, possibly even to an extreme degree, into helping their sons get along? Thus were born Cole and Justin Boden. Very different men, but with parents who are tired of their lifelong conflict. These two love each other, but they don't get along and now they are going to have to. Instead of giving one son the birthright, as Isaac did, Chance Boden says, "If you can't stop fighting, I'm giving it all away to someone else. Starting now you live under my roof, and the first one who leaves loses the whole ranch for everyone."

2. Heath Kincaid, the hero of No Way Up, is a secondary character in another novel. Tell us about him.

Heath is the little brother in *Over the Edge*, book 3 in the KINCAID BRIDES series. He shows up and claims the Kincaids' absent father had been married to his mother. Simple math based on the boy's age means their father had two wives and two families. And one look at Heath—who looks exactly like the rest of them—is all the proof they need that they've found a "surprise" little brother. I've always wanted to give Heath his own story and his own happily ever after.

One of the fun characteristics of Heath is his big brother, Seth, the hero of *Over the Edge*, who's just a few degrees short of crazy, and sometimes he kind of tips, well, *over the edge*. Seth went through a lot of trauma in his childhood, plus he had two big brothers to clean up his messes, and then he went to war. Many things conspired to make Seth a wild sort of man. Now here's Heath, and he's been the man of the family, with his mother and him alone in a cabin in the wilderness almost all his life. His pa's been dead a long time, and even when he was alive he wasn't much help. So Heath just does NOT have time to be crazy. And yet he's got this little streak in him that can flare up once in a while, and it's fun to set that Seth part of him in with a very capable, no-nonsense cowhand.

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3. Are there really mesas in the area where your story is set?

I based Skull Mesa on the Acoma Pueblo tribe and their home on top of a mesa in New Mexico. Also, in reading about the Acoma, I found an old myth that was handed down through the Pueblo people about a tribe being trapped on top of a mesa. So I set up Skull Mesa to have *no way up*, and yet when our hero climbs up, it's clear that long, long ago someone lived up there. This is all part of the mystery surrounding the Cimarron Ranch.

4. What comes next for you?

No Way Up is book 1 of the CIMARRON LEGACY series. I said I wanted Jacob and Esau (aka Cole and Justin Boden) to learn how to get along. This book is their little sister Sadie's story, and she's gotten crossways with her father and mother, too. *Long Time Gone*, book 2, is Justin's story, and *Too Far Down* is Cole's. By the time I'm done, I'll have made sure all the Bodens know how lucky they are to come from a loving family.

5. Tell us about the novella prequel to this series.

The Boden Birthright, which is currently free in all ebook formats, tells the love story of Chance and Veronica Boden. Chance left the big city after his wife died. He needs to escape the smothering hands of his wealthy, influential in-laws, who want Cole, the only child of their only child, firmly under their care and direction. Chance heads west very quietly, to escape them and also to find his true home.