



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH SARAH LOUDIN THOMAS

1. Where did you get the idea for *Until the Harvest*?

After writing *Miracle in a Dry Season* I really wanted to continue the Phillips family saga but with new characters. Dipping into the next generation seemed like a logical step. Henry is Casewell and Perla's son—basically a good kid who honors his parents and does what's expected. But how might a "good kid" react if his world was suddenly turned upside down by tragedy? Of course, Henry needed a foil, so I introduced him to Margaret Hoffman—a no-nonsense girl who isn't very sentimental. Unless we're talking about her little sister Mayfair who has an unusual gift—people she cares about seem to be healed when she's around. Of course, there's physical healing and then there's the spiritual healing Henry—and Margaret—need. This story let me explore how that might look.

2. How attached do you get to your characters?

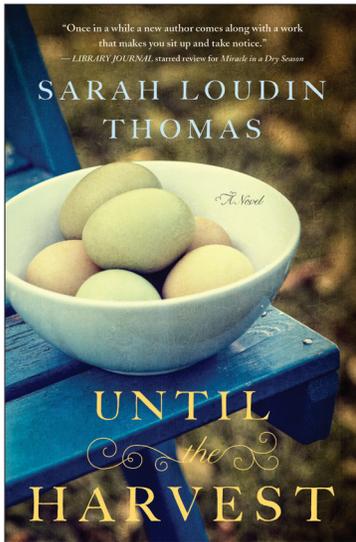
In my first novel a secondary character dies. After writing that scene, I sat back in my chair, feeling sad. Then I reached for the phone to call my dad since I knew he'd want to come to the funeral. Fortunately, I remembered my character wasn't real before I dialed. As much as I enjoyed writing new characters in *Until the Harvest*, much of my joy was in spending time with some favorites from the first book. Frank Post and the Talbot sisters will forever and always be some of my favorite people. Sometimes I think about going to visit them...

3. Were there really still moonshiners in West Virginia in the 1970s?

While the end of Prohibition put a dent in the moonshining business, there was still a good bit of illegal alcohol being produced in the hills and hollers of West Virginia in the 1970s. Some counties were dry and some folks simply preferred drinking the liquor they knew. I researched newspapers from that time and found quite a few articles about the authorities raiding moonshine operations. Of course, there was less of it, which is why Charlie Simmons was looking to get into other, even less savory, sources of income. Of course, these days there are several legal distilleries in the state—I think it's become something of a fad.

4. What's been the highlight of your writing journey thus far?

The highlight was when my husband introduced me at the launch party for *Miracle in a Dry Season*. It's hard to get up and talk when your husband has told the audience he still feels like he did on your wedding day eighteen years ago. The whole day was simply amazing. That morning, the pastor filling the pulpit in our little church, where we held the event, preached about Jesus feeding the five thousand (he had no idea that was the inspiration for the book). My mom and dad were there as well as other family members. We had a bean supper and square dancing along with the book sale and reading. So many friends came out that they filled the sanctuary. Days like that remind me that rankings and sales are not the measure of success. Love is.



Until the Harvest
by Sarah Loudin Thomas
Trade Paper ISBN: 978-0-7642-1226-0
\$14.99; 304 pp.
Ebook ISBN: 978-1-4412-6961-4
Release Date: May 2015

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