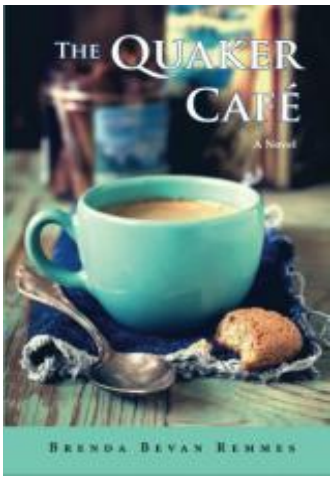
The Quaker Café

by Brenda Bevan Remmes



About the Book

When Liz Hoole, a free-spirited liberal from the Midwest, marries into a conservative Quaker family in a small rural town in North Carolina, she knew it would be a delicate task to negotiate the raising of her four boys in compliance with Quaker values?but as much as she tries, she always seems to fall short of expectations.

When Judge Corbett Kendall, the politically powerful father of her best friend, dies, Liz stumbles upon secrets from the past that threaten to unravel the delicate fabric of racial harmony in an easily-divided town. Whether examining the history of Cottonwoods Plantation in town or eavesdropping on the latest gossip at the local Quaker Café, she finds herself burdened with the truth of an injustice that she cannot reveal, even to her own husband.

THE QUAKER CAFÉ dances with rich Southern characters: Miss Ellie, the elderly owner and gracious hostess of the café knows more than she admits; Debbie Bradshaw, Liz?s dynamic and colorful secretary, knows more than she should; and Frogbelly, who thinks he knows it all. Yet, it?s a lady-in-pink that stands by Liz as she goes through her most heart-wrenching moments.

Through strong sisterhood and a family that proves to be surprisingly tolerant, the peace is kept and deep, unforgotten wounds are healed.

Discussion Guide

1. There is a Shaker song written by Elder Joseph Brackett in 1848 that was used primarily as a dance tune:*Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free*

'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

Quakers have used it to emphasize their testimony to a ?simple? life. In your view, what does ?living a simple life? entail? Can you have a simple life in today?s society?

2. Do you believe that Grandma Hoole was too hard on Liz, or was she correct in her efforts to point out to Liz that living life in a frenzy of activity diminishes the value of the more important things?

3. Truth is another paramount testimony of Quakers. In fact, they refuse to take an oath in court to swear to tell the truth because they maintain that the oath implies that one does not always tell the truth. They *affirm* that they are telling the truth as they always do. Grandpa failed to tell the truth at a crucial moment in his life. What do you think he should have done differently at each stage?

4. This story was set in 1992 in a small southern town. Do any of the same issues remain in our communities today? What has changed?

5. The theme of this book is that good people make bad choices which can have unintended and sometimes tragic consequences for the innocent. Who made choices that you think should never be forgiven?

6. Do you feel that the black community was represented in a manner that respected not only the maids and field workers, but also the ministers and other professionals of that community?

7. In what ways were the First Methodists, Jerusalem Baptists and Quaker worship styles different? Do their styles indicate to you conflicting beliefs in any way?

8. In what ways could Issac Perry?s death have been avoided. How many people played a role this tragedy?

9. Johnson Perry?s life was evidently destroyed by his burning hatred over what had happened to his father. Do you consider him an innocent victim of the crime or a man to be judged by his own wrongdoing?

10. It is not uncommon for people to try to redeem themselves by doing ?good deeds.? Do you believe that Grandpa Hoole had been redeemed in the eyes of the community?

11. My first ending to the book had LuAnne shooting and killing Grandpa in the scene in the pharmacy. A few people have said that would have been a better ending, ultimate vindication for LuAnne. What do you think?

12. These men were portrayed as fathers: Grandpa Hoole, Chase Hoole, Issac Perry, Johnson Perry, Rev. Shannon and the Judge. Who among them fulfilled their role as a good father?

13. Several strong women were portrayed: Liz, Maggie, Billie, Grandma Hoole, LuAnne Perry, Debbie Bradshaw and Helen Truitt. Which one did you identify with the most? Why?

Author Bio

Brenda Bevan Remmes has written for *Newsweek* and university journals, and she spent her career conducting rural health education programs for the Schools of Medicine at both the University of North Carolina and the University of South Carolina. She lives with her husband near Black River Swamp, North Carolina in an old family home filled with the history and stories of generations past. THE QUAKER CAFÉ is her first novel; she is working on a second novel.

Critical Praise

?I laughed, I cried, I loved this book throughout and to the very end?This book appeals to anyone with a Southern soul and who appreciates a humorous approach to life's challenges. I marveled at the Quaker wisdom and hope to adopt the "way will open" approach to life.?

?I'm a big fan of entering other cultures --- and for this Midwestern-raised, adopted New Englander, the South is another culture. Not to mention the world of contemporary Quakerism. THE QUAKER CAFÉ is a joyful read with a carefully crafted story that ends from the heart. It rings true. Read and enjoy!?

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