



Unearthing the Ghosts

A Mystery Memoir

Linda Mary Wagner

Buried Gems

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Personal story and social history by a woman mistakenly diagnosed as schizophrenic at age 17 illuminates mistreatment of mental illness and paths to mental health.

In 1969, when Linda Mary Wagner was a 17-year-old “healthy hippie,” her Depression-era parents came across her diary and discovered she had recently smoked pot and lost her virginity. Puzzled and confused about the massive social changes in American society in the 1960s, they consulted a psychiatrist who told them that their daughter, the youngest of six children, was mentally ill.

Unearthing the Ghosts: A Mystery Memoir relays how the social and psychological forces of the day coalesced into a diagnosis of schizophrenia that resulted in Wagner’s being committed during her senior year of high school to a psychiatric ward – without having met the doctor who put her there.

The memoir explains how Wagner recovered from what she calls “this coming-of-age trauma” while weaving into her narrative carefully researched social history that uncovers other mysteries, some of which she solves and some that remain unanswered.

These include stories about Wagner’s Aunt Leona, who spent her life in a state mental institution in upstate New York, and Wagner’s doctor, a Cuban-born psychiatrist responsible for questionable research on the impact of psychoactive drugs during the 1950s and 1960s, some of which remain in use today.

Unearthing the Ghosts also includes a thoughtful look at how the era’s assumptions about women, sexuality, parenting, and power contributed to the black and white world that resulted in Wagner’s misdiagnosis and mistreatment.

Wagner comments, “My book argues for an end to well-meaning abuses in the name of ‘treating’ mental illness and a quest, instead, for mental health. My hope is that my story will inspire others to have faith in themselves, support their loved ones, and push for the civil and human rights of those whom society labels as ‘insane.’”

“A powerful, well-written, beautifully reported book.” ~ **Marion Roach Smith, author of *Writing What You Know: Realia, The Roots of Desire: The Myth, Meaning and Sexual Power of Red Hair, and Another Name for Madness***

AUTHOR: Linda Mary Wagner spent more than a dozen years as an independent journalist, primarily for National Public Radio and its member stations in Buffalo and Chicago. She later worked as a communications specialist for The Brooklyn Historical Society, Consumers Union, and Associated Press. While earning her Masters in Public Administration from Columbia University, she forged a third career in nonprofit leadership and management. Currently employed as a nonprofit executive in the public health field in Albany, New York, Ms. Wagner is married and the mother of two adult children. *Unearthing the Ghosts: A Mystery Memoir* is her first book.