

The Cracker Queen

A book review by Amy Carlan

Please complete the following sentence:

You might be a Cracker Queen if:

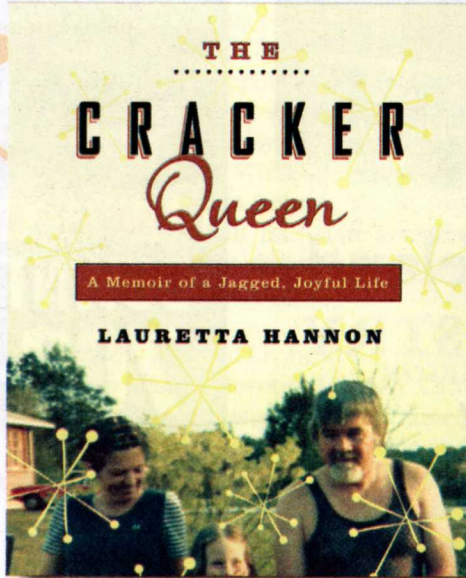
- A. Your parents met at a moonshine stand.
- B. Your mama threw packs of cigarettes out her car window to chain gangs.
- C. Your daddy frequently picked you up from school without his shirt.
- D. All of the above.

Well, if you answered D you are correct and on your way to Cracker Queen coronation. Shoot, you might already be one. Either way, Lauretta Hannon's *The Cracker Queen—A Memoir of a Jagged, Joyful Life* is a must read for you. This book is the antidote to all of the sugary sweet literary portrayals of the South that make me want to gag. The South that Lauretta Hannon grew up in wasn't so much "moonlight and magnolias" as it was "blue light specials and Pabst Blue Ribbon."

Growing up in the military enclave of Warner Robins, Ga., Hannon had a father who was a free-spirited and gifted musician battling personal demons, while her kind-hearted mother wrestled with feelings of abandonment. Throw in anger, alcoholism and infidelity, and you've got the makings of one tumultuous childhood.

There was the time Mama smashed out the windshield of her daddy's Pontiac as promised, because he played a late night gig against her wishes. Another time, Mama and Hannon's "Crazy Aunt Carrie" got so hammered from a night on the town that they forgot where they lived, scuffled with a policeman and spent the night in jail.

But don't think that this is some "Tobacco Road" downer. Mixed in with the fighting, cussing and carrying on are some great stories that show the fierce love that Hannon and her parents



The Cracker Queen—A Memoir of a Jagged, Joyful Life can be purchased at the Jefferson Public Library, Downtown Interiors and Love's Gifts in Jefferson and at Giftworks and Our Town Antiques in Commerce. For more information, visit www.thecrackerqueen.com.

shared despite the chaos that surrounded them. There was the beautiful strawberry printed dress that Mama bought for her at Kmart, and the unique connection that she and Daddy had when they discussed music or practiced telepathy. There was always some "fun" in the dysfunction.

Despite it all, Hannon survives and thrives in her life. She attends college, finds love and eventually becomes a successful professional. She ends her book on a triumphant and empowering note with her decision to quit her established career and become a writer, after 20 years of thinking she couldn't and shouldn't do it.

According to the definitive rules that Hannon has given, Cracker Queens are fearless. They are also grateful, forgiving and don't give a rip about what any-

one thinks. They aren't bitter victims of circumstance. They take the cards they are dealt and learn and grow from them. Life is a gift and one to be enjoyed.

In the words of Lauretta Hannon, "Live out loud, laugh hard and love life to death." It's the Cracker Queen way.



Lauretta Hannon, author of The Cracker Queen—A Memoir of a Jagged, Joyful Life is a southern writer, storyteller, commentator and the "anti-Southern Belle."

Meet the author, purchase a book and get it signed at Lauretta Hannon's book signing on Friday, June 25, at 7 p.m. at the Jefferson Civic Center. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.



Amy Carlan fulfills her love of books as the branch manager of the Jefferson Library. When she's not working, she's either cooking or decorating—or reading about cooking and decorating. Carlan lives in Commerce with her husband, Chris.