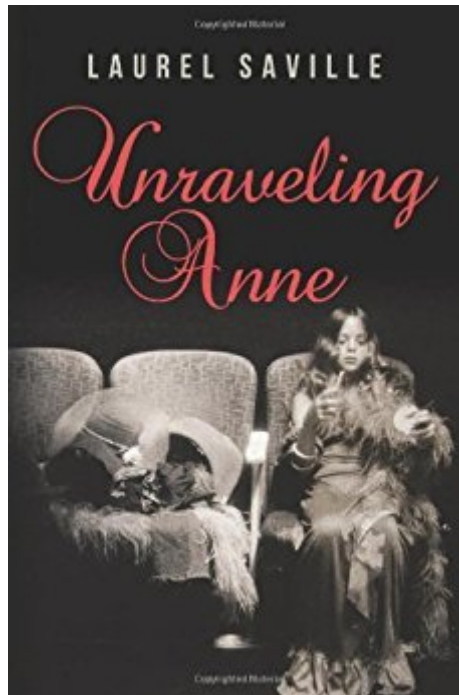




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Unraveling Anne



Synopsis

“After all, this is my mother we’re talking about. As her daughter, I belonged to her; as my mother, she also belongs to me. I don’t have her anymore, but I still have her story.” In 1950s Los Angeles, Anne Ford was the epitome of the California golden girl, a former beauty queen and model-turned-fashion designer whose success and charm were legendary. So how is it possible that such a woman could die in squalor, an alcoholic street person brutally murdered in a burnt-out West Hollywood building? In searching for answers to the heartbreaking trajectory of her mother’s life, writer Laurel Saville plumbed the depths of Anne’s troubled past and her own eccentric childhood to untangle the truth of an exceptional, yet tragic, existence. What she discovered was a woman who was beautiful, well-educated, and talented •yet tormented by internal demons and no match for the hedonistic culture of Southern California in the 1960s and 70s. With unflinching honesty and stirring compassion, Saville struggles to reconcile the two faces her mother presented the world: the glamour-girl-about-town the public saw and the unpredictable, bitter alcoholic her children knew. Most importantly, Saville explores how what we bring forward from previous generations can shape our own lives, and how compassion and love for a difficult parent can be a person’s bridge to a better life.

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Customer Reviews

This is a timely and readable memoir although left me with more questions than answers. Grotesque parent tales are popular in recent years (seems like they exploded after Angela's Ashes) and I can't seem to get enough of them if they are written reasonably well and seem at least somewhat believable, which this was. A few editing oversights but the story is so interesting you don't really care. I say the subject is 'timely' because of the celebrity culture we live in, where being young and famous is the be all end all, and in this Anne was a cautionary tale of what CAN happen after the limelight is taken away and when addictions run amok. The author's mother had real artistic talent though as a designer, she was not just a poser or hanger on. A mysterious combination of bad luck, bad judgement, and bad habits kept her from sustainable success. Anne's mother had invested in real estate and been frugal so she was able to help support Anne financially when her own modeling and designing career stopped paying the bills. (This is also a cautionary tale on the hazards of being overly indulgent with grown children with substance issues.) There was still a lot of questions and mystery left. The author goes back to a time when her mother seemed sound and wholesome, but there is no viable explanation for what led a talented beautiful woman presented with a feast of opportunities, to end up a broke, bloated addict, being murdered and dying in squalor. Of course untreated addiction can lead to that - but what hurt or trauma ignited the addiction is what I was left wondering. It was only very subtly hinted at.

There is research that points out that children with an "unavailable" or a dead parent are high-achievers. That is the sole consolation for stories like this, where the behavior of the parent is so cringe-worthy. The child has no choice but to dig deep to find its own reserve of calm and contentment. Like Laurel, these kids are typically very intelligent, as was the parent before he or she ran haywire, and, if they are able to leave home early enough, will make it unscathed. But the ghost will be there forever. The story is well-written, albeit a little distant and dry in tone, to be expected, I think,, and a fairly quick read, moving along like the freight train you know will crash at the end.

Clearly in the category of rotten childhood stories, where the parents were crazy, mean, or wildly interesting but not so interested in their child. Or all three. A sad account and a very thorough

portrayal of the full personality of her mother. It is amazing that the author could pull away and tell it, and have a stable, happy life as an adult. That's worth the read.

Saville writes a very moving memoir, of a childhood spent with her free-spirit talented alcoholic mother in California during the 1960s and 1970s. She and her brother have learned to fend for themselves, as the mother opens the house to all manner of artists, musicians, and hippies. Their father is an absent figure, who also doesn't want to bear the responsibility of raising his own children. The mother slips farther down into alcoholism and mental illness, alternately living in her old abandoned house or in a vacant lot. Saville has long-since moved on and tried to build her own life as an adult with her own wants, needs, and ambitions. She lives with resentment and hostility toward her mother, who seems to hold the same opinion of Saville. When her mother is found raped and murdered in the old abandoned house, the family tries to come together to sort things out and come to some peace with their relationships. Clues to her mother's early life come to light when the author finds a box of her mother's notebooks, letters, and miscellaneous personal documents. She seeks to understand better the mother she only experienced as a small child, and to rebuild broken family relationships with her father and siblings. I don't know why so many memoirs are written by female authors about their dysfunctional, mentally ill, addicted mothers. Is it the mother-daughter relationship that is so fraught with emotion and unmet expectations? I don't know, but Saville did a wonderful job. I am beginning immediately on "Henry and Rachel", a novel based on actual letters the author found from her great-grandfather. Saville is an insightful author, bringing her stories to life for the reader.

Excellent true story about a very talented yet mentally disturbed woman. Anne had alot of issues and had no business raising children unsupervised. I'm disappointed no one stepped in and took over with the kids other than the Grandma helping out. Thankfully now a days behaviors like that wouldn't fly and children wouldnt be ignored unsupervised and basically neglected. Laurel is a good writer and its pretty amazing she turned out so well considering her dysfunctional background. I'm no Dr. but obviously Anne was bi-polar,narcissistic schizchophrenic and or all of the above. Great and Easy Read and kept my interest all the way through.

This is an incredible book. It seems to be autobiogaphical, at least in part. The "layering" of the story is wonderful - like unraveling a story.It made me think about my relationship with my mother. I want to read more by Laurel Saville!

This memoir opens the reader to a journey of pain and reflection that is amazing in its path to more awareness and appreciation of herself and her mother.

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