



BETTY: The Story of Betty MacDonald, Author of The Egg and I

Anne Wellman

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The very first biography of American writer Betty MacDonald. Well educated and raised as a lady, Betty in 1927 married a man she barely knew. The newlyweds immediately started a chicken ranch in the remote American Northwest. Here Betty had to contend with a difficult husband, loneliness, pregnancy, primitive neighbors, and thousands of chickens. This was the stuff of her first book, The Egg and I. A Hollywood movie of the book appeared two years later and at least eight further movies based on the popular Egg and I characters Ma and Pa Kettle were to follow. But what really happened to Betty on the farm?

BETTY: The Story of Betty MacDonald, Author of The Egg and I Details

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From Reader Review BETTY: The Story of Betty MacDonald, Author of The Egg and I for online ebook

Jill Meyer says

Betty MacDonald was the author of four adult books - including "The Egg and I" - and five children's books. Her "Mrs Piggie-Wiggle" series books has been read and enjoyed by generations of children (and adults) since they were published in the 1950's. But who was Betty MacDonald and how autobiographical were her four adult books? In her biography, "Betty: the Story of Betty MacDonald", author Anne Wellman takes a look at the real woman, both through her work and archival sources.

We "Betty" fans have wondered for years how closely the "literary" Betty matched the "reality" Betty. Pretty well, according to Wellman. Born into a rather intriguing family - a combination of western father and eastern society mother - the Betty Bard grew up in a home secure with love, if not always by money. Her father died relatively young and her mother raised the five children to get along in society and enjoy what it offered. Betty married a would-be chicken farmer at a young age and settled down on an Olympic Peninsula chicken farm. Two children later, she left Bob Heskett and returned to Seattle and life in the bosom of her loving family. Wellman doesn't seem to sugar-coat the facts of Betty's life. Heskett, a WW1 veteran, probably had PTSD and life with him was often difficult.

Anne Wellman also supplements the "literary facts" when they're not always correct. The biography is a shortish, but well-written biography - with some pictures - which is almost required reading for fans of Betty MacDonald. The plus is that Wellman also writes about MacDonald's family.

Christiane says

I grew up with Betty MacDonald's books (my mother loved them first) and almost felt like I knew her and her large, close-knit, easy-going, eccentric family (Gammy was my favourite). Ma and Pa Kettle, Birdy Hicks etc. felt almost as familiar as our real-life neighbours and I would have moved to a beach house on Vashon Island at the drop of a hat.

So I was pleasantly surprised to find Anne Wellman's book on Kindle Unlimited. It provides interesting additional information on Betty and her family and reveals some darker aspects of her life and character.

Aj McLaughlin says

Wonderful

As a child, The Egg & I was a favorite. It's been interesting to learn about the author. Thanks !

DEVON RAINS says

Biography of a favorite writer

I grew up watching Ma and Pa Kettle movies and read Betty MacDonald's classic, "The Egg and I" in high school. Years later, I had the great pleasure of reading her other "I" books particularly enjoying "The Plague and I". But reading those books one had to wonder how much was really true. This pleasant biography attempts to fill in the gaps. If you are a fan, this it's definitely worthwhile. And if you've never read the delightful and humorous books of Betty MacDonald, go now! Start with "The Egg and I" and let me know how much you enjoy it!!

Mary says

Good to know more about Betty

I've always loved Betty MacDonald's books. I enjoyed this bio of her and the photos. It's interesting to read about the differences between her books and her actual life.

L.A.B. says

I first read The Egg and I when I was in high school. I've reread it a few times since. It is a fictionalized account of Betty MacDonald's life on a chicken farm located on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State. I thought it painted wonderful word pictures of the soggy Northwest, the demands of baby chicks, and the antics of the neighbors. The latter are probably better known than Betty for their hayseed life--remember Ma and Pa Kettle? That's them (Marjorie Main played Ma). But above all else, I like the book's honesty and laughter.

The book I just finished is a biography of Betty MacDonald written by Anne Wellman (2016). It traces Betty's upbringing in a nomadic family who found love and inspiration wherever they lived, and whose family ties carried them through the trying times of the Great Depression and World War II. Betty's story is both ordinary and amazing and I learned much about the writer. I also found out the fascinating backstory of The Egg and I. Wellman pulls it all together in an easily readable narrative that brings to life the events and characters, both fictional and real, that populated Betty's short life.

Betty MacDonald wrote other books based on her real life experiences, and now that I know more about that I'll probably track down one or two to read. She was also the author of the children's Mrs Piggie-Wiggle series. You can read Wellman's biography without having read any of Betty's works, but it would be more meaningful if you first read The Egg and I.

Gina says

Many people who love books will know the name Betty MacDonald. Although her books came out before I

was born, I have read and loved her style of writing, her autobiographical novels, and stories of her life during the early part of the 20th century.

"Onions in the Stew" was the first book I read by MacDonald, and after that I was off and running to read her other books.

This book, however, was written to delve further into the fascinating, if sometimes tragic, life of MacDonald - to add some facts, and to clear others up. The books MacDonald herself wrote were considered lightly fictionalized accounts of her life - this book reveals the hard (and sometimes heartwarming and light-hearted humor) of MacDonald.

MacDonald's life as a child whom was highly educated - which, in itself, wasn't always the norm for girls in the early years of the 20th century), and taught how to be a "lady" in every way. In 1927, she marries a man she had just met, and found herself living on a chicken ranch in a very, very remote area of the US Northwest. Times were hard, there were no luxuries such as electricity, heat, or running water, winters were brutal, and she struggled to adapt to this rough lifestyle. Money was beyond tight. In 1945, she penned her first book, "The Egg and I", which became a huge success, bringing in much-needed revenue and set her off on a lifetime of producing literature.

I was drawn into this book about her life, which, as I mentioned, was written with humor and with a little added fiction, in MacDonald's own books. I knew Betty had suffered hardships, loss, and financial disaster, along with the joys of children and love.

Sandra Sharp says

Encyclopedic

This book was informative, but not at all engaging. Because I had driven past the sign for "Egg and I Road" many times and knew that the Bishop Farm was in operation until just a week or so ago, I was eager to read about Betty MacDonald. This title did not do her justice.

Mickey says

The copy I won from Goodreads Giveaways arrived today and I devoured it in one sitting. Having read all of Betty MacDonald's memoirs, I was curious to see what further information the author could provide. I wasn't disappointed - there was lots of information about her first marriage and the ugly end to it, and more elaboration on the hardships she & her family endured before her books were published and eased their financial burdens. I also didn't know that Ms MacDonald had been sued by a family that claimed the Kettles in The Egg & I were based on them, as well as a few other people claiming characters were based on them as well.

All in all, I'd say Anne Wellman did a bang up job!

Judy Egnew Ness says

This book provides a welcome addition to knowledge about Northwest author Betty MacDonald, and behind the scenes information about her life and how she came to write the books that made her famous.

I grew up in the Washington town of Port Townsend, near where Betty lived on a chicken farm with her first husband, and my oldest stepbrother married a granddaughter of the Bishop family (supposedly the inspiration for the "Kettle" family in her book "The Egg and I.") So I read all of her books and was familiar with the locations described in her stories. But I also knew there were many things added/embellished/left out as the author used her creative imagination and sarcastic wit to make her account of "pioneer life" into a best seller.

I've also read quite a bit about the history of Firland Sanatorium which Betty MacDonald renamed "The Pines" in her book "The Plague and I" about recovering from tuberculosis. Her roommate "Kimi" in the sanatorium, is real life Monica Sone, who went on to write "Nisei Daughter" about her life as a Japanese-American, who spent time with her family in Washington internment camps during WWII.

This book is an interesting and entertaining read for anyone who lives/lived in Seattle or the Olympic peninsula, historians and adventurers, or those who enjoyed Betty MacDonald's books.
