

JEANNE LYET GASSMAN--long bio

An only child, Jeanne was born in San Francisco, CA in 1955. Her father was an aircraft mechanic and pilot, and her mother was an artist. The family relocated to Colombia, South America when she was two for her father's job and returned to the States shortly before Jeanne started kindergarten, due to the political unrest and concerns about the family's safety. They settled in DeRidder, LA, where Jeanne's father managed the local airport.

According to Jeanne's mother, Jeanne wrote her first short story when she was four, a piece called "Tall Cat," about a kind kitty that offered wise advice and never scratched. Jeanne dictated the story to her mother and illustrated it herself.

Jeanne's family moved to Winslow, AZ when she was in third grade, and she spent the rest of her formative years in the town famous for "standing on the corner." Jeanne's parents established a thriving air ambulance service, ferrying patients from Native American reservations to hospitals and clinics in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. In fourth grade, Jeanne started playing the violin, a class offered by her public school. She still plays violin today.

After graduating with a B.A. in English from Eastern New Mexico University, Jeanne moved to Albuquerque with plans to pursue an M.A. in English at the University of New Mexico. She met her husband Larry there while playing in a pit orchestra for the musical, *Jesus Christ, Superstar!* Jeanne's husband was principal bassoonist, and she was concert mistress. Many couples have their "song," but Larry and Jeanne have their own rock opera!

Jeanne never completed her M.A. because she and her husband moved to northern California so he could teach math at the University of the Pacific. When Jeanne fretted about abandoning graduate school, about not having a job or a plan, her husband responded, "You've always wanted to be a writer, so write." Jeanne published her first freelance story a couple of months later, and her life changed forever.

After several job changes and several moves for Larry's career in aerospace, Jeanne and Larry settled in Colorado Springs, where they started their family. But tragedy struck. Jeanne had two life-threatening pregnancies less than three years apart, and in both cases, their son and daughter, respectively, were born prematurely and died during infancy. Larry and Jeanne became active in The Compassionate Friends and later co-facilitated S.H.A.R.E., a grief support group for parents who have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal death. They worked with grieving parents for four years--until shortly after they adopted their daughter, the oldest of their two bi-racial children. A year later, they adopted their son. Jeanne has written and published several pieces about grief, neonatal death, and adoption.

Larry and Jeanne moved to Peoria, AZ in 1999 and still live in the same house. The turn of the century was a difficult time because Jeanne's parents passed away less than two months apart. Her mother died from the complications of Alzheimer's disease in Dec. 1999, and her father died from congestive heart failure in February 2000. Jeanne's creative nonfiction piece, "Healing Arts," is a tribute to her mother's struggle with that horrible disease.

Throughout the many moves and the many shifts in her life, Jeanne continued to write and publish short fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. In 2008 Jeanne returned to graduate school to complete her Masters of Fine Arts in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her awards include an Independent Publishers Book Award for her debut novel, *BLOOD OF A STONE*, a nomination for 2015 Best Short Fictions, a 2016 Pushcart Prize nomination, and fellowships from Ragdale and the Arizona Commission on the Arts. In addition to writing and editing, Jeanne also teaches creative writing for arts organizations and community groups.