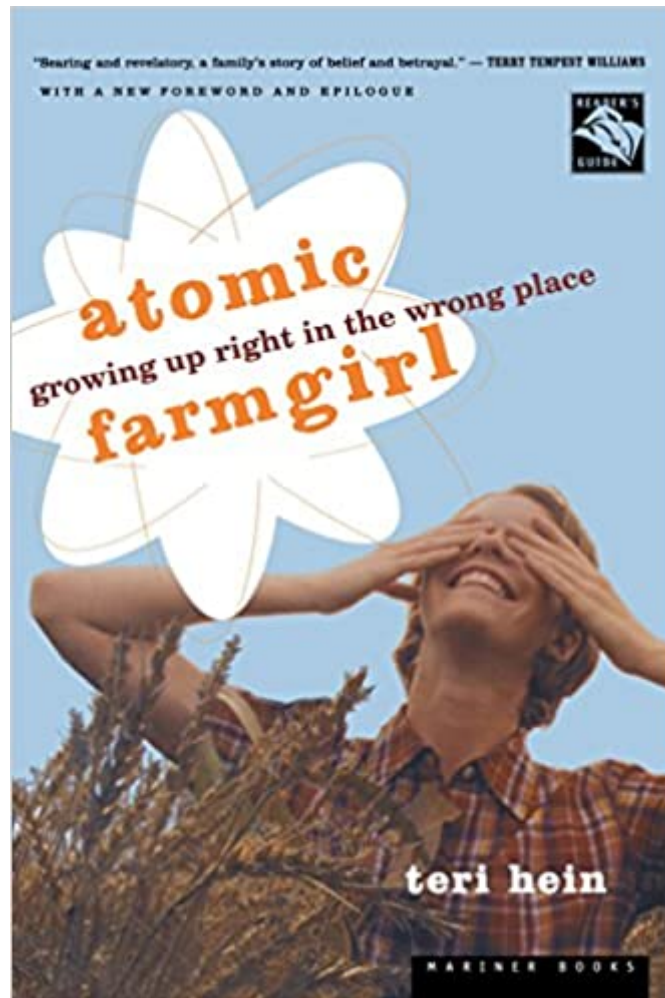




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# Atomic Farmgirl: Growing Up Right In The Wrong Place



## Synopsis

Atomic Farmgirl is a wise, irreverent, deeply personal story of growing up right in the wrong place. The granddaughter of German Lutheran homesteaders, Teri Hein was raised in the 1950s and 1960s in rural eastern Washington. This starkly elegant landscape serves as the poignant backdrop to her story, for one hundred miles to the south of this idyllic, all-American setting lay the toxins — both mental and physical — of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. From horseback riding to haying, Flag Day parades to Cold War duck-and-cover drills, Atomic Farmgirl chronicles a peculiar coming of age for a young girl and her community of hardworking, patriotic folk, whose way of life and livelihood are gradually threatened by the poisons of progress. Combining a profoundly tender story of youth with politics and an unmistakable sense of place, Teri Hein has written a memoir that is part Terry Tempest Williams, part Erin Brockovich, part Garrison Keillor. In the end, she offers a rich and ribald journey into the universal mysteries of childhood, love, community, and home, a journey that confirms humankind's infinite capacity for hope.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The book has a neon quality: a warning, mixed iwth irony and loss." -The Los Angeles Times  
The Los Angeles Times

Teri Hein grew up on a wheat farm in eastern Washington, where her great-grandparents originally

homesteaded. In the years since she left home for college, she has led an adventurous life -- teaching abroad, rafting the Grand Canyon, traveling to northwestern Pakistan to learn firsthand about the plight of Afgani women refugees, doing research in the Jungle, and hiking above the Arctic Circle. She has received awards for her teaching, as well as a Fulbright Scholarship. She was a founding member and teacher of The Hutch School, an innovative program for children who are undergoing cancer treatment at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. She is also the Founding Executive Director of 826 Seattle which was awarded the National Youth Arts and Humanities award.

Atomic Farmgirl is a well-written account of the life of a downwinder's family and her neighbors in the Palouse Hills of eastern Washington State. A downwinder is a person who lived in the area where iodine-131, Hanford Nuclear Reservation's nuclear waste, was released in the late 1940s through the 1950s. After the Freedom of Information Act was passed and the Spokesman Review started researching the releases and comparing them with the wind patterns, this information became available to the populous at large. This downwinder's story is open, honest, and filled with excellent examples of character development. The author, Teri Hein, paints a picture of life in small town farm communities in eastern Washington. She covers the rolling hills, harvest time, wheat, Steptoe Butte, loess, bird-hunting, small schools, churches, football, basketball, baseball, parades, horses, and the list goes on - joyous memories of growing up in a small farming community. However, some looming treachery began to emerge. First, her father, then a neighbor boy, another childhood friend, a neighboring mother, and the list grew over two decades. These people, the ones she knew most closely began to get sick and most died. They contracted thyroid disease or cancer in one of its many forms - leukemia, lupus, Hodgkin's lymphoma, and more. Eventually, Teri became aware that something unique and sinister was occurring in her neighborhood, as seven of the ten farm families within a square mile had come down with the diseases. In most of those families it was multiple members with thyroid disease or cancer. Her book covers the lives of those victims. Like Teri, I grew up in one of these small towns - Oakesdale, just 25 miles southwest of Teri's beloved Fairfield. If you draw a 100-mile line between the Hanford site and Fairfield, Oakesdale will be bisected by that line, a line which also represents the prevailing southwesterlies. The experience of my neighborhood is congruent to that of Teri's neighborhood. One cold winter morning in the mid-fifties we awoke to a freshly fallen cover of snow. It was dotted with beautiful pink spots like some miracle, but it was not from nature, nor from heaven. I believe it was one of the many releases of radioactive toxins from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. We frolicked in that

snow, made snow angels and snowmen. Within the year, my closest neighbors Tom Crossett and Ray Ebert developed thyroid disease. Subsequently, Tom's sister Suzy Crossett, my cousin Susan Gregory, Tom's closest friends Danny Horn and Mike Lamb, my closest friend John Rogers, and three of the four Byrum brothers have all died of cancer, long before their time. Consequently, Teri's account is deeply poignant to me. Although I knew some of her older friends, I've never met Teri Hein, but I feel as if I've known her all my life. Teri filets her soul open to the world and exposes every nerve. I highly recommend *Atomic Farmgirl: Growing Up Right in the Wrong Place*. Everyone should be aware of this tragedy. ã ã *Atomic Farmgirl: Growing Up Right in the Wrong Place* Chris Gregory, author, *Buckshot Pie*, [BuckshotPie.com](http://BuckshotPie.com), Semper Pi Publishing, Tekoa, WA ã ã *Buckshot Pie*, a Family's Struggle Through Homesteading, the Great Depression, and World War II

Everyone, in Washington, Oregon & Idaho should read this book! A true story about a wonderful family/community loyal to their country and the effects of the Hanford Nuclear Plant on neighboring farms. Very touching stories about the people in the author's life.

Great book.

Not a very interestingly written book. Really a bit bland. But it was for school reading, so whatever.

I'm on page 91, and I don't think I'll finish this rambling babble. The writing is some sort of self inflicted psycho-therapy, and we are in the chair, next to the couch, tapping a foot, looking at the clock.

*Atomic Farmgirl* is a well crafted account of the life of a downwinder's family and neighbors in the Palouse Hills. The story is open, honest, and filled with excellent examples of character and scene development. Although my recent book, *Buckshot Pie*, has a different topic - the childhoods of 5 Palouse Hills brothers and their contributions during WW II, the similarities are striking. We both paint a picture of the life in smalltown farm communities in eastern Washington. We both covered the rolling hills, plowing the deep soil, harvest time, wheat, Steptoe Butte, loess, bird-hunting, small schools, churches, football, basketball, baseball, parades, horses and the list of is endless. *Atomic Farmgirl: The Betrayal of Chief Qualchan, the Appaloosa, and Me*. Like the author, I grew up in one of these small towns - Oakesdale, just 25 miles southwest of Teri's beloved Fairfield. If you draw a 100-mile line between Hanford and Fairfield, Oakesdale will be bisected by that line, a line which

also represents the prevailing southwesterlies. The experience of my neighborhood is congruent to that of Teri's neighborhood. One cold winter morning in the mid-fifties we awoke to a freshly fallen cover of snow. It was dotted with beautiful pink spots like some miracle, but it was not from nature, nor from heaven. I believe it was one of the many releases of radioactive toxins from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. We frolicked in that snow, made snow angels and snow men; and built forts and had snowball fights! Within the year, my closest neighbors Tom Crossett and Ray Ebert developed thyroid disease. Subsequently, Tom's sister Suzy Crossett, my cousin Susan Gregory, Tom's closest friends Danny Horn and Mike Lamb, my closest friend Johnny Rogers, and three of the four Byrum brothers have all died of cancer, long before their time. Consequently, Teri's account is deeply poignant for me. I feel as if I've known her all my life. Teri filets her soul open to the world and exposes every nerve.

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