

**PRAIRIE ROMANCE FICTION BESTSELLER  
JANETTE OKE**

**WELCOMES CO-AUTHOR T. DAVIS BUNN**

**by Janet Chester Bly**

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The sharing is very intense, a true act of co-creation.*

**T. Davis Bunn**

**A Chick Flick Moment**

It had been a crazy, stressed-out month. We endured the rigorous detailing of several large funeral dinners, a wedding reception, baby showers. Our village celebrated their annual Winchester Days, complete with parade entries, mini-operetta musicale, booth sales. The Library Board was responsible for support-and-provide for various weekly outreach programs. Our Community Church sponsored a 5-day VBS program, bussing in hordes of kids from surrounding communities. Three forest fires in our locale threatened an invasion of several hundred firefighters needing catered meals and bathroom facilities from our village of population: 308. Added to that--unexpected out-of-town guests, adult children facing major crises, personal physical maladies . . . my friend and I, in the thick of all these activities and more, felt close to crash mode.

What better time to have a Chick Flick moment.



My Janette Oke *Love Comes Softly* books cluster in chronological order next to the Anne of Green Gables series and the Little House on the Prairie stories—all fond memories from my prairie romance reading days. I grabbed up two Oke Hallmark DVDs, stuck popcorn bags in the microwave, and invited my friend over.

How to explain the healing powers of the emotional rush of wholesome melodrama to the female psyche? It's a stress reliever, values cleanse, revelation navigator and ideals preserver all in one weepy swoosh.

In *Love Comes Softly*, nineteen-year-old Marty heads west with her young husband. They've just arrived after arduous travel and chosen a homestead, when her husband dies from a fall chasing an errant horse. Devastated, alone and two months pregnant, immediately after the make-shift funeral, a neighboring widower with a motherless daughter proposes marriage while the preacher's still in town. She's forced by pure survival into a convenience marriage to a man she doesn't even know, much less love, and still facing grief from her fresh loss.

A winsome movie, even better when shared with a kindred spirit.

We grabbed a Kleenex box and let our hearts swell and the tears flow. *Love Comes Softly*-a Janette Oke original classic, full of relational miscues, misunderstandings and locked wills along the process of gut-level coming to terms with that final push to the commitment to love. We cried our way to peace . . . and a happier world view.

## **WHY FANS LOVE JANETTE OKE**

An excellent storyteller. A warm writing style. Moral values coupled with endearing characters. Restful, yet provoking reads. Oke delivers a picturesque, homesy, sometimes humorous panorama of the prairie lifestyle. Readers venture into a time when life was hard but simple. Very little clutter, fewer possessions, but each one treasured. Relationships highly valued. Daily life focused on plain pleasures and survival.

Before the recent explosion on the marketplace of what is termed "Christian Fiction," Oke had been publishing and gaining a huge audience for her romances, historical romances and historical fiction since 1979. Some consider her a contemporary forerunner of the modern genre.

Her largest appeal caters to early teen girls, seniors and romantics who want sex behind closed doors along with home-spun wisdom on love and how to do it. Writes a 24-year-old, who began reading Oke books when fifteen: "I had a very different outlook on life after reading this novel, and even more so a very different outlook on the man I want to marry."

But she's got men readers too, who admire characters such as widower Clark Davis, in *Love Comes Softly*:

Frankly, this novel helps identify strong characters that men can study.

In my continuous search for positive male role models, I have struck gold again .

. . . Jeffrey W. Bennett, Amazon reviewer

(Oke's books) reveal the gamut of honest and true family and spiritual values without maudlin characteristics but with pathos, compassion and humor. Robert S. Kemper, Amazon reviewer

The character of Clark Davis exemplifies the wise, patient, godly, long-suffering male figure who depends on divine direction to deal with the complex women in his life.

When Oke began to suffer the debilitation of fibromyalgia, she had to slow down. She reassessed the prolific output schedule her fans had come to expect. She determined she needed help. Choosing to work with a co-author provided Oke with some risk, even as talented and internationally well-known a one as T. Davis Bunn. Would the fans notice an unwanted difference in her stories in style and theme and turn away? Amazon.com recorded mixed reviews on the first one, *Return To Harmony*: "One of Janette Oke's finest books" to "the worst Janette Oke I have read." Some fans believed they could detect when Bunn or Oke did the writing and they didn't "mesh together in unison." An oft-repeated remark complained of slower beginnings. It took some getting used to for a few of the faithful.

Noted John Mort, a reviewer on BookList.com, about a later book, *Tomorrow's Dream* . . .

It's almost as though Bunn wrote the first novel, and Oke this one, though both productions are blander by far than either writer's individual work.

However, multitudes of fans were delighted in the collaboration of two of their favorite authors, appreciated the life-like character development, and kept them both at bestseller status: "Janette Oke's down-home, easy-to-relate-to characters combine with T. Davis Bunn's detailed, captivating descriptions and humor . . . "

T. Davis Bunn seems at once a genius partner as well as a startling choice for a prairie romance collaboration. Although he's written gentle, thoughtful books such as *The Quilt*, recently reissued in gift book form, Bunn is also an intrigue-and-suspense kind of guy who writes action thrillers, fantasy, and sci fi—fast-paced tales. Yet one fan notes that in all his books "they have this quiet inner core that runs through the plot like a strand of gold."

As to co-authoring with a female, he had prior experience. His wife Isabella has worked with him on his projects since the beginning. "She acts as my agent, and more importantly she has been the source of many great ideas. She helps with the research and every stage of the editing process," Bunn commented in a 2007 interview with FaithfulReader.com. Now that Janette Oke has fully retired because of continuing health issues, Bunn lists Isabella as co-author on recent books, such as the *Heirs of Acadia Series*, a sort of follow-up to the *Song of Acadia* series he did with Oke. In the FaithfulReader.com interview he commented about Oke's retirement:

This was expected, as she had been talking about it for years. But it was still a great disappointment. We have co-authored nine books together, and become close friends in the process. I find a great deal of joy and wisdom in the co-writing of books. The sharing is very intense, a true act of co-creation. It has been truly wonderful seeing Isabella step into this process.

*The Meeting Place*, first book in the *Song of Acadia* series, received the 2000 North American Historical Fiction Christy Award. Set in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Canada, two women from very different backgrounds form a bond of friendship that politics and social unrest threaten to destroy. Library Journal acknowledged the duo's "huge readership" and pronounced the work "smoothly written." The majority of fans declared, "Oke does it again, with Bunn's help!"



**JANETTE OKE** has more than 23 million books in print. Her first book, *LOVE COMES SOFTLY*, was published by Bethany House Publishers in 1979—with another sixty-seven books and a number of articles following. The *Love Comes Softly* movie series, has been one of

Hallmark Channel's most highly rated broadcasts ever. Some of her books have been translated into fourteen languages, made into movies and/or presented as musical dramas. Janette has received numerous awards, including the Gold Medallion Award, the Christy Award of Excellence, Evangelical Christian Publishers Associations President's Award, the Christian Booksellers Association Lifetime Achievement Award, an Honorary Doctorate from Bethel College, Mishawaka, IN, and the Lester K. Tarr Award from the Word Guild of Canada.

**T. DAVIS BUNN** has sold more than four million books in fifteen languages. Honored with three Christy Awards for excellence in historical and suspense fiction. His bestsellers include: *The Great Divide*, *Winner Take All*, *The Meeting Place* (Book 1 in Song of Acadia series with Oke), *The Book of Hours*, and *The Quilt*. A sought-after lecturer in the art of writing, Bunn was named Novelist in Residence at Regent's Park College, Oxford University. A native North Carolinian who now lives abroad, **T. DAVIS BUNN** was recognized internationally as a consultant, lecturer, and speaker in the area of international finance. Prior to this, he completed studies in psychology and economics at Wake Forest University.

**Janet Chester Bly** has authored eleven books including *Awakening Your Sense of Wonder* and *Hope Lives Here*, plus she has co-authored eighteen books with her husband, award-winning western author, Stephen Bly, which includes *The Hidden West Series* and *The Carson City Chronicles*. Check her out at <http://www.BlyBooks.com>.