Our Endangered History

“The atmosphere was contagiously exhilarating even for women who were losing their lovers. They were a part of world history, right there in their small chair in a small restaurant in a small southern town.” (*Songbird*, Chapter 34)

It’s a scene that rang true for many in Anniston, AL in the 1940s when World War II and neighboring Fort McClellan brought the world to their doorsteps by hosting young soldiers from all over the nation and German POWs from half way around the globe. This southern town was faced with the joy and excitement of welcoming these soldiers into their lives and then with the heartache of letting them go when they were called to the front. It was a time that brought great change to the world, and the people and families of this town experienced that change daily.

The stories of this pivotal time in our history are what led Jacksonville, AL native Laci Barry Post to write “Songbird”. This historical fiction novel was inspired by the stories of her grandparents who grew up in the Jacksonville/Anniston area during World War II. “I can remember as a child listening to my grandparents talk about how Anniston was booming and how the soldiers from the fort filled Nobel Street. My great grandfather worked at the fort, my grandfather was in the Navy during World War II and stationed in the Pacific, and my other grandfather was later in the Army. I realized that these amazing stories only exist in the memories of those of who tell them. And when they’re gone, those memories are gone with them. I wanted my book to show the reader what life was like in the 1940s, the sacrifices that were made, the joys that were experienced, and the lives that were changed forever.”

While the plot of “Songbird” is fictional, it is centered on true historic events that took place during the war era and how they affected people living in Anniston and Jacksonville, AL. Highlighting period elements such as bomb drills, rationing, women entering the work force, war related radio broadcasts, the writings of Ernie Pyle, and the unforgettable music of the 1940s, the novel offers an insight into what life was like in the small towns of war-time America. “It’s wonderful to know the big dates and events of World War II, but the true heart of history is how those big dates and events impacted families and individuals, and that’s the story I tell,” Laci shares.

With the publishing of “Songbird” in December 2013, it would seem that Laci’s goal of capturing, preserving, and retelling the stories of her grandparents and the history of the Anniston/Jacksonville area was complete. However, in the research and writing of the book, she continued to discover one amazing story after another. Not only stories from her family and town, but from all over the country. So what started as a passion for writing and history has developed into a full preservation movement.

“Songbird” is now book one in a planned series of books entitled “The War Song Series”. On TheWarSongSeries.com website not only will you find information about the books, but you can read about the history of the music featured in the series on the “Follow the Music” page. A historic preservation blog called “War Stories” is hosted on the site and features photos, videos, and articles retelling the history of the World War II era. Users are invited to submit their own stories and memories to be incorporated into future blog posts. Links can be found to a “War Song Series” Facebook page and Pinterest boards all dedicated to documenting, preserving, and retelling the stories of our past. And the “Preservation” page is full of resources and links to help anyone find out what they can do to preserve the history around them.

“We live in a time like no other when the tools and equipment to record and retell our oral histories are literally at our fingertips. Cell phones and tablets make it so easy for us to record our parents and grandparents telling their stories. And with free resources like YouTube and WordPress and Google to help us distribute these stories to the world, we’re not just preserving them for the next generation but for all generations to come,” Jason Post, Laci’s husband and a video producer, says.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation recognizes May as National Preservation Month, and this year’s theme is “New Age of Preservation: Embark, Inspire, Engage”. To find out more about what you can do to Embark, Inspire, and Engage your community in preserving our oral history, visit the preservation page at TheWarSongSeries.com.