

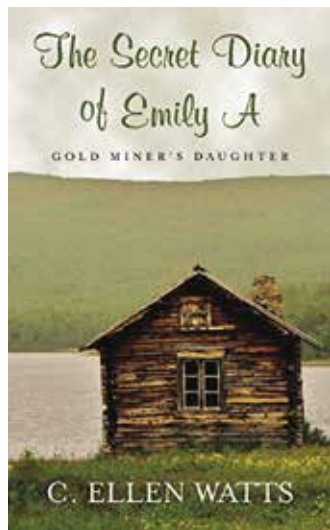
BOOK REVIEW

The Secret Diary of Emily A

C. Ellen Watts (2017)

C. Ellen Watts of Nampa, Idaho, has published her mother's story under the title, *The Secret Diary of Emily A: Gold Miner's Daughter*. Although Watts changed a few names, this book is a true capsule of pioneer life in Oregon.

The book begins in 1903 when Grandmother Lee gave ten-year-old Uvena "Emily" Arnold a notebook for writing down things she wanted to remember. Emily chronicles matter-of-factly her life and family relations while growing up in Oregon in the Jacksonville area: Squaw Lakes, Elliot Creek, French Gulch, Watkins School, Jacksonville, and later the Table Rock area. The diary covers a seven-year period of Emily's life and ends in 1910.



Emily's father often spent time away from home while he mined for gold on Elliot Creek, copper at the Blue Ledge Mine, etc. Emily helped her mother raise her siblings and care for the household—a big job in those days with no electricity, running water, refrigeration, or highways and cars. She clearly describes the severe challenges pioneers overcame in order to survive.

Although Emily's mother taught her children at home, Emily longed to go to school, as she valued reading and education. She cherished her loving parents and appreciated the simple joys of special events and treats but longed for broader horizons. The lessons she learned from her mother and books allowed her to dream and prepare for opportunities and experiences awaiting her.

Margaret Myers
myersmaggie74@gmail.com

POETRY CORNER

Gift of the Magus

by John Sack

cyberscribe2@gmail.com

Eckhart sat cross-legged
on a blanket in the snow—
"Homeless. Need help." scrawled on
cardboard propped
beneath a storefront window where
robotic elves
feigned labor in a Disney sweatshop,
while over his head the speakers brayed
of angels they had heard on high.

I took him to a diner where the waitress,
miffed at working Christmas,
brought him chowder and a side of bread.
"Thank you for your gift of gold," he said.

Then with starry eyes afire
he spoke of the new infant
swaddled in the manger once again,
of shepherds kneeling and the cattles' low,

"All to no point, you know, if he's not born in *you*,
in you to daily grow.

"Seek him with the wise men, friend.
Pay him homage in the secret cave.
Give him your Body with its wealth,
the incense of your Mind,
and myrrh, the balm of ever-suffering Souls.

"Home is where we start and where we end,"
he sighed with a slight smile,
"And heart is where the home is."

My homeless heart burned at his words and
snowdrifts banked around my vacant stable
wanted so to melt in floods of recognition.

While through the silent night the wing-whirs
whispered
"Gloria in excelsis Deo."

Essay **Stories from South Africa**

BY MARGARET PERROW DELLA SANTINA

Kgomotso and I sat on upturned plastic crates in the concrete yard outside his mother's house in Soweto, South Africa. Squinting into the thin winter sunlight, Kgomotso thought back to the 1980s and '90s: "There was the struggle, and the elections. But did we or didn't we achieve freedom?"

It was August 2018. I met Kgomotso 20 years ago in 1998, four years after the first democratic elections in South Africa. He'd joined an employment-skills project in a youth-development organization where I was doing research. In 2018 I returned to South Africa for four months of follow-up research, spending time with Kgomotso and others who were part of that 1998 project.

Now in their 40s, they have experienced some changes in the past two decades: most are employed, two have bought their own homes, they all live on paved streets, most have indoor toilets, some have built additions to their four-room houses. But they are all disappointed that change has come slowly, that they still struggle to make ends meet and support their children, that their lives are not as different as they'd hoped.

Twenty-four years after its first democratic elections, South Africa remains a severely inequitable country that is plagued by racialized poverty, crime, and unemployment. Yet stories of ordinary South Africans, neither destitute nor part of the new black elite, remain largely hidden. My friends from Soweto welcomed me into their homes, neighborhoods, and churches to tell me some of those humbling and inspiring stories.

But traveling and living in other countries also reveal one's *own* story. I am the daughter of a white English-speaking man who left South Africa in 1951. My privilege today owes much to the wrongs done to black people in South Africa.

So this journey was also an attempt to find my own South Africa, one that might somehow forgive me, my father, my ancestors—including my grandfather, one Captain Perrow. In the early 1900s he wrote a newspaper article about his solo trip by motorcar from Cape Town to Johannesburg. In this charming but somewhat self-congratulatory account, he complained about "the number of gates encountered" that made his journey challenging.

Of course, we all encounter "gates" along our journeys, but challenge is relative to privilege.

I have tacitly blamed my father for not being critical of apartheid, but this is an unfair blame afforded by hindsight. After his mother died when he was eight, he was sent to boarding school in then-Rhodesia, where he would have been given no tools to critique the legacy of colonialism. Later at the University of Cape Town, his white privilege would have seemed unproblematic. He could



Top photo: Margaret with some Soweto friends.

Bottom photo: Kgomotso and his mother—with a jar of Applegate River blackberry jam.

bury himself in his studies and emerge with an engineering scholarship to the UK, unaware of the full impact of apartheid. The black-empowerment movement and the anti-apartheid struggle were still far off in the future when he left South Africa in 1951—it would be my cousins, children of my generation, who became African National Congress members and activists in the 1960s and '70s.

I knew my father as quiet, brilliant, and reserved—a man who engaged reluctantly with politics or social issues. He died in 1982. He didn't live to see Mandela's release from prison, South Africa's 1994 transition to democracy... or my 2002 Soweto wedding.

Today, I nurture relationships in South Africa that span decades and races. I try to forgive my father for what he didn't see, know, or do. I want to create a different reality. This quest is partly hopeful, partly impossible. I am constantly reminded of privileges that correlate with my skin color and native language.

But what feels like the greatest privilege, one my father would have found unfamiliar and curious, is the love and caring of my black township friends and *mamkhulus* (grannies) who make me feel like a *whole* person, not merely a *white* person, when I'm in Soweto. I like to think my dad would have seen his South Africa differently, through mine.

Kgomotso is one of those friends; so is Siphso. Their mothers are some of those *mamkhulus*. Siphso recently married after securing the approval of his long-dead ancestors through traditional rituals and ceremonies. There are times I wish I could communicate with my ancestors directly, the way Siphso does with his. Maybe together, as they watch our friendships unfolding, our ancestors can lend support to real social change.

Margaret Perrow della Santina
mperrow@sonic.net
See more photos and track the journey on Facebook ([margaret.perrow](https://www.facebook.com/margaret.perrow)).