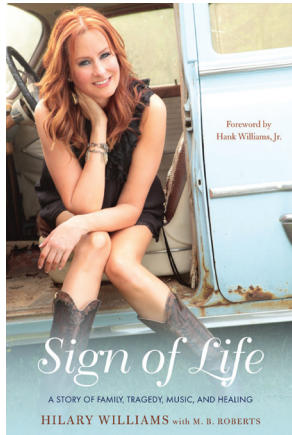


REVIEWS

HILARY WILLIAMS WITH M.B. ROBERTS

Sign of Life: A Story of Family, Tragedy, Music and Healing

[Da Capo Press]

BOOK

“Pain is a sign of life.” Those words from her doctor, which first seemed cruel, came to be a mantra for singer-songwriter Hilary Williams after a March 2006 car accident nearly killed her and left her unable to walk for several years. Pain is a part of Williams’ family legacy, as Hilary notes in this evocative memoir. Her grandfather, country legend Hank Williams, suffered terrible back pain throughout his short life. Father Hank Jr. also survived a life-threatening accident when he was about her age, falling more than 400 feet down the side of a Montana mountain. Her younger sister Holly (herself a talented singer and songwriter) was in the car with her and also suffered injuries, albeit less severe. Through the decades, the suffering of the Williams family has inspired some of country’s most enduring music, but that must have been little consolation through Hilary’s three-year recovery.

Sign of Life doesn’t tread the familiar ground of Williams family lore too heavily, except to briefly add Hilary’s own insightful recollections. For squeamish readers, the book may seem to sometimes linger uncomfortably on medical details, but they’re mostly necessary to explain injuries that took 23 surgeries to correct. (Today she still occasionally walks with a cane.) Hilary’s story is one of unimaginable determination, but she and co-writer M.B. Roberts resist the urge to overdramatize or evangelize in a tale that needs no hyperbole. These candid observations about family, faith and healing should inspire the next Williams generation and beyond. —KD

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