

## ABOUT THE BOOK – A NOTE FROM LEAH WEISS

I learned how to write better by entering short-story contests. Every month I'd look for prompts on writing websites or in *Writers Digest*, then I'd have one month to write the story that would be pitted against others. Usually the story was a max of 1500 words, about five pages. Usually there were 300-400 entries. For years my stories didn't win, but I studied the ones that did. I saw that the winning stories were rougher than mine, the characters more flawed, the story deeper. So in 2011, I wrote a short story that began with the prompt *I struggle to my feet*, and the character Sadie Blue sprang to life. A young girl in Appalachia, pregnant, newly married, in trouble. That short story was my first national win and I received a check for \$150.

The next year I was influenced by Elizabeth Strout's Pulitzer-prize winning book, *Olive Kitteridge*, a complex character with a selfish underbelly. In my novel, you can see Olive's influence on Gladys Hicks and Prudence Perkins. It was a delight to climb into their ill-fitting skins and walk their warped paths. I discovered they had reasons for their bitterness; that their disappointments wounded them. I delved deep enough into their personality to understand why they were the way they were.

Writing *If the Creek Don't Rise*, tested my skills to develop authentic and believable characters. The book began and ended with the 2011 winning short story, and Sadie Blue was the heart. My task was to create a balance of characters to surround dear Sadie. Some would help her find a better life. Others would hinder her journey.

The book's success has been a wonder. Right out of the starting gate, it was selected as an Indie Next, an Okra Pick and the wonderful Library Reads. It was a finalist for the Library of Virginia's Literary Award and People's Choice. It was on the bestseller lists for the Great Lakes, Midwest and the South. It appears that *southern* is appreciated on a broader stage than south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

And now my book will journey to Centereach NY on Long Island for the 2020 Middle Country Reads. What an outstanding honor! I look forward to seeing you on April 14<sup>th</sup> when *one book fosters a community to come together*.

Note: for those who don't have time to read, you'll enjoy the **audio version** of *If the Creek Don't Rise*. It is beautifully performed by Kate Forbes and Tom Stechschulte.

*If the Creek Don't Rise* was released August, 2017. Here are some notable accomplishments to date:

- Selected as an Indie Next, Okra Pick and Library Reads.
- Awarded a Starred Review from Booklist
- Awarded a Starred Review from Library Journal
- Chosen by Books-A-Million as their December 2017 National Book Club
- Released in all major airport bookstores
- #5 on the National Bestseller list for Independent Bookstores for the 2017-2018 Winter Quarter.
- On Bestsellers List for Southern Independent Booksellers (SIBA for 5 weeks), the Great Lakes (GLIB) and Midwest (MIBA).
- Nominated for the 2018 Southern Book Prize.
- A finalist in the 2018 Library of Virginia People's Choice Award
- A finalist for the 2018 Library of Virginia Literary Awards Fiction Category: