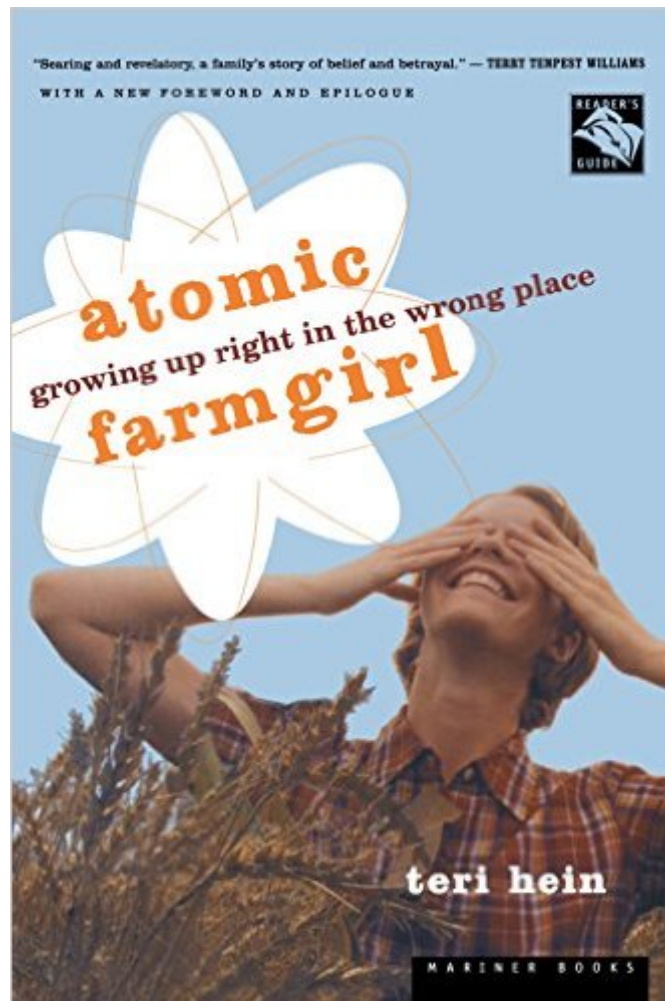


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# Atomic Farmgirl: Growing Up Right In The Wrong Place



## Synopsis

Atomic Farmgirl is a wise, irreverent, deeply personal story of growing up right in the wrong place. The granddaughter of German Lutheran homesteaders, Teri Hein was raised in the 1950s and 1960s in rural eastern Washington. This starkly elegant landscape serves as the poignant backdrop to her story, for one hundred miles to the south of this idyllic, all-American setting lay the toxins — both mental and physical — of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. From horseback riding to haying, Flag Day parades to Cold War duck-and-cover drills, Atomic Farmgirl chronicles a peculiar coming of age for a young girl and her community of hardworking, patriotic folk, whose way of life — and livelihood — are gradually threatened by the poisons of progress. Combining a profoundly tender story of youth with politics and an unmistakable sense of place, Teri Hein has written a memoir that is part Terry Tempest Williams, part Erin Brockovich, part Garrison Keillor. In the end, she offers a rich and ribald journey into the universal mysteries of childhood, love, community, and home, a journey that confirms humankind's infinite capacity for hope.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars — See all reviews — (18 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

Atomic Farmgirl is a well-written account of the life of a downwinder's family and her neighbors in the Palouse Hills of eastern Washington State. A downwinder is a person who lived in the area where iodine-131, Hanford Nuclear Reservation's nuclear waste, was released in the late 1940s through the 1950s. After the Freedom of Information Act was passed and the Spokesman Review started researching the releases and comparing them with the wind patterns, this information

became available to the populous at large. This downwinder's story is open, honest, and filled with excellent examples of character development. The author, Teri Hein, paints a picture of life in small town farm communities in eastern Washington. She covers the rolling hills, harvest time, wheat, Steptoe Butte, loess, bird-hunting, small schools, churches, football, basketball, baseball, parades, horses, and the list goes on - joyous memories of growing up in a small farming community. However, some looming treachery began to emerge. First, her father, then a neighbor boy, another childhood friend, a neighboring mother, and the list grew over two decades. These people, the ones she knew most closely began to get sick and most died. They contracted thyroid disease or cancer in one of its many forms - leukemia, lupus, Hodgkin's lymphoma, and more. Eventually, Teri became aware that something unique and sinister was occurring in her neighborhood, as seven of the ten farm families within a square mile had come down with the diseases. In most of those families it was multiple members with thyroid disease or cancer. Her book covers the lives of those victims. Like Teri, I grew up in one of these small towns - Oakesdale, just 25 miles southwest of Teri's beloved Fairfield.

Atomic Farmgirl is a well crafted account of the life of a downwinder's family and neighbors in the Palouse Hills. The story is open, honest, and filled with excellent examples of character and scene development. Although my recent book, Buckshot Pie, has a different topic - the childhoods of 5 Palouse Hills brothers and their contributions during WW II, the similarities are striking. We both paint a picture of the life in small town farm communities in eastern Washington. We both covered the rolling hills, plowing the deep soil, harvest time, wheat, Steptoe Butte, loess, bird-hunting, small schools, churches, football, basketball, baseball, parades, horses and the list is endless. Atomic Farmgirl: The Betrayal of Chief Qualchan, the Appaloosa, and Me. Like the author, I grew up in one of these small towns - Oakesdale, just 25 miles southwest of Teri's beloved Fairfield. If you draw a 100-mile line between Hanford and Fairfield, Oakesdale will be bisected by that line, a line which also represents the prevailing southwesterlies. The experience of my neighborhood is congruent to that of Teri's neighborhood. One cold winter morning in the mid-fifties we awoke to a freshly fallen cover of snow. It was dotted with beautiful pink spots like some miracle, but it was not from nature, nor from heaven. I believe it was one of the many releases of radioactive toxins from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. We frolicked in that snow, made snow angels and snow men; and built forts and had snowball fights! Within the year, my closest neighbors Tom Crossett and Ray Ebert developed thyroid disease.

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