

Rise! A Girl's Struggle for More is an old-fashioned, historical family drama—a sweet, yet edgy, coming of age story. Set in the 1920s, it is based on the life of the author's grandmother.

The main character, Ruby Pearl, is mature beyond her years, born at least a decade too soon. Growing up in a family of nine children in Oilton, Oklahoma, with her nose constantly in a book, she's the girl who would rather read than can tomatoes.

Ruby studies hard to make good grades, while her parents humor her. They encourage the courtship with her beau, Arthur, who they expect will be their son-in-law when the two graduate from high school. Ruby has loftier goals than that. She admires her momma and big sister, Rilla, the "CEOs of the household," and hopes to have children and a home of her own to manage someday, but first things first!



"You will fall in love with Ruby and her dream to be educated and have a career in the 1920s. Boehm beautifully captures the changing times of a horse and buggy town, with the arrival of automobiles, new dress styles, and courtships. I am proud to have a heartwarming story written about our town."

— Kathy Dupee, Curator and Founder, Oilton Historical Society, Oilton, Oklahoma

"In her first historical novel, Boehm delights and fascinates the reader as she recounts the details of her grandma Ruby's life. Through Diann's insightful writing, Ruby's strength, passion, and determination leaps from the pages."

— Dr. Jacalyn Kerbeck, MBA, DBA, executive producer, TV/radio show host

"In Rise! we look into the life of a determined young lady, ready to break free of the confines of the early 1920s. Boehm's portrayal of young Ruby has the reader cheering her on as she works to make her mark in a man's world. A delightful read."

— Tammy Posey, author, curator of Drumright Historical Society Museum

"Rise! A Girl's Struggle for More is a story told in living color. It's a panorama of times, places, and experiences to be totally enjoyed by the reader—as if watching a movie. It will resonate with the younger generation and create opportunities for intergenerational conversations."

— Pam Clingerman, Grand River Historical Society Museum, Chillicothe



US\$18.99

CDN\$24.99

UK£14.99

ISBN 978-1-989833-11-7

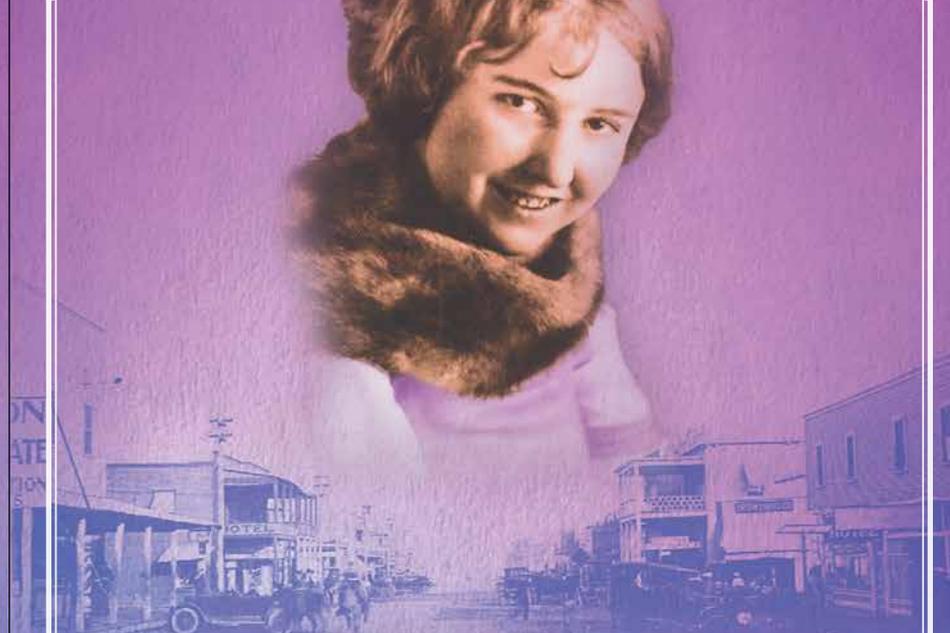


9 781989 833117



RISE! A GIRL'S STRUGGLE FOR MORE

Diann Floyd Boehm



Rise!

A GIRL'S STRUGGLE FOR MORE



Diann Floyd Boehm



Rise!

A GIRL'S STRUGGLE FOR MORE

Diann Floyd Boehm



I want to dedicate my first novel to two special women in my life: my mom, Mabel Adella Harris Floyd, and my Grandma Ruby, Ruby Pearl Terrill Harris, who enriched my life even more with her stories and guidance.

RISE! A Girl's Struggle for More

Copyright ©2021 Diann Floyd Boehm

All rights reserved under international copyright conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, without the prior written permission of the author.

First published in 2021 by



Halifax, NS, Canada
www.ocpublishing.ca

Cover and interior book design by David W. Edelstein
Cover background photo courtesy of the Drumright Historical Museum

ISBN - 978-1-989833-11-7 (Paperback Edition)

ISBN - 978-1-989833-12-4 (eBook Edition)

ISBN - 978-1-989833-13-1 (Dyslexia-friendly Edition)

C O N T E N T S

Foreword ix

∞ **Part One: A Dream** ∞

- Chapter 1: Pluck the Chicken 3
- Chapter 2: Sunday Potluck Dinner 15
- Chapter 3: A Decision 24
- Chapter 4: The Unexpected Surprise 42
- Chapter 5: Not the Week Anyone Wants 55
- Chapter 6: It is All in the Details 77
- Chapter 7: Ruby's Birthday 101
- Chapter 8: Dinner is Served 117
- Chapter 9: A New Day 131
- Chapter 10: Love is in the Air 139
- Chapter 11: The Talk 146

∞ **Part Two: A Plan** ∞

- Chapter 12: Christmas Break and the Plan 159
- Chapter 13: A Night to Remember 173
- Chapter 14: The Debate 189
- Chapter 15: Mommas Join Forces 197
- Chapter 16: Dance the Night Away 205
- Chapter 17: Graduation 218
- Chapter 18: Guilt 231

Chapter 19: Updating Arthur 236

Chapter 20: Plan in Motion 248

∞ **Part Three: Plan in Action** ∞

Chapter 21: The Journey Begins 261

Chapter 22: Room and Board 274

Chapter 23: College Days 294

Chapter 24: Mystery Solved 317

Chapter 25: Dad's Turn 326

Chapter 26: Christmas 337

Chapter 27: A Loss 354

Chapter 28: Graduation . . . Now What? 365

Chapter 29: The Job Hunt and Much More 375

About the Author 391

F O R E W O R D

I am dedicating my first novel to two special women in my life: my mom, Mabel Adella Harris Floyd, and my Grandma Ruby. Mom always shared family stories about grandmas, great-grandmas, and even great-great-grandmas and grandpas. How lucky our family is to have these stories to pass down the family line. My mom was a trailblazer in her own right. She worked hard as a wife and mother and was part of a team that developed the first hospice program for veterans in Hampton, Virginia.

My Grandma Ruby was very special to me and played a significant role in my life. Almost every week, my family would go to her house and have Sunday dinner. There were many weekends that some of my brothers and I would spend with Grandma. Being with her and having her exceptional guidance and love was priceless. There was a time when I was a young adult that I lived with my

grandma, and she enriched my life even more with her stories and guidance.

Rise! A Girl's Struggle for More is a biographical, historical fiction based on my Grandma Ruby's life. Ruby was born in 1904 in a small town in Oklahoma, back when most Americans lived outside of cities, before any world war, when young ladies like Ruby were expected to continue the same way of life as their parents and grandparents and not stray too far.

As an adult, Grandma Ruby was a single parent and working woman, which was unheard of in the mid-1900s. She lived her faith and never said a bad word or spoke ill of anyone. Grandma Ruby always reached out and helped others. Her smile and giggle were contagious. I am sure she had faults, but through my eyes, she was the kindest person I knew, who did without so others could have more.

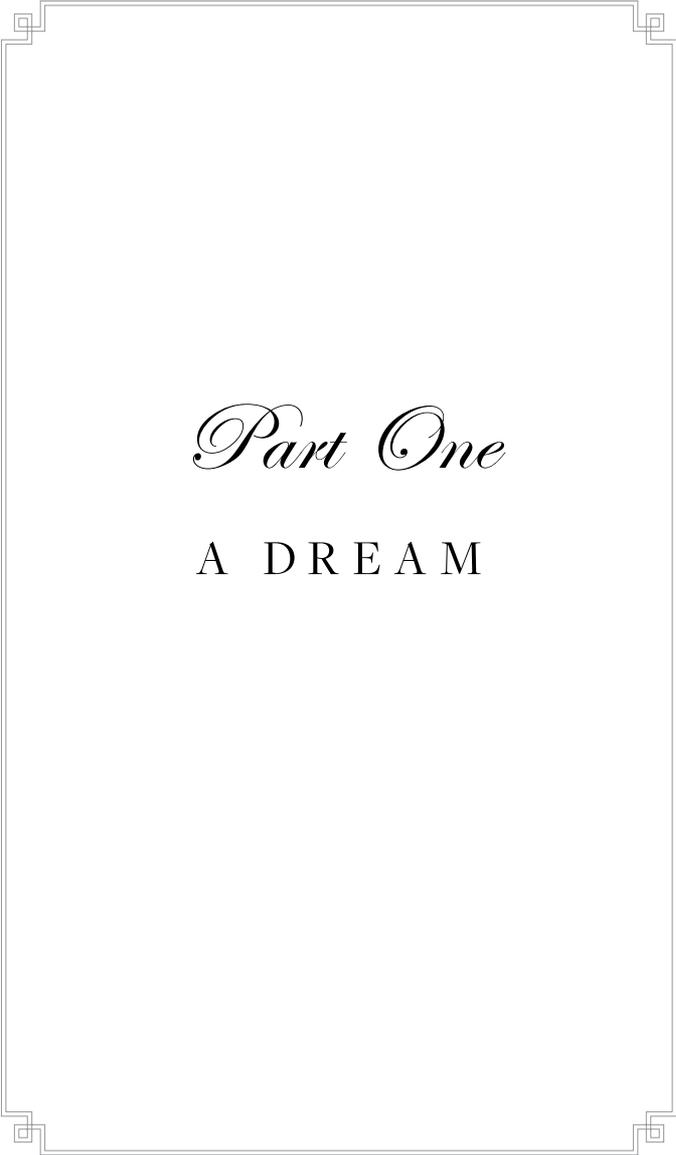
When Ruby came into the world, no one could imagine the changes that would occur in the next twenty years, much less during the rest of her life. Some changes were local and immediate—the oil boom in Oklahoma and the Black Wall Street Massacre in Tulsa. Some changes were nationwide or global—World War I, the 1918 flu epidemic, the Roaring Twenties, migrations within the country, the Great Depression . . . wave after wave of changes that shaped Ruby's life.

How did this young girl, my grandmother, decide

to leave home? To earn money for her “escape” by secretly entering and winning dance contests? To jump into the fast-moving current of big city life? Her experiences led her to teach her grandchildren, “As long as you can breathe you are meant to learn and be more than you were the last day. If you fall, that's OK. Just figure out what you learned and get up and keep going.”

I hope that this book provides an enjoyable way to learn about some historical events and people, to gain insight into how people's thinking evolved during these times and how there were women who were breaking tradition. My grandma would come to look at the moon knowing astronauts had landed there and that she was able to rise above expectations and break through almost insurmountable barriers to become a well-educated, successful woman.

Diann Floyd Boehm



Part One

A DREAM

Chapter 1

PLUCK THE CHICKEN



“SERIOUSLY, RUBY PEARL, PUT THAT BOOK DOWN and help your sister get the chickens plucked for Sunday’s dinner!” Ruby’s momma yelled upstairs.

“Yes, Momma, I am coming,” Ruby replied. Reluctantly, Ruby placed a marker in her book and left the upstairs landing alcove, her favorite reading spot. She loved it there because, as she read, she could look out the long window into the big backyard and see her momma’s garden. The alcove was the perfect place to gain composure, as some of Ruby’s sisters would do, and for others, like Ruby, it was a place to read and let imagination run wild.

The alcove was inviting, with the built-in cherry wood chest with its soft cushions and the blankets tucked away inside just waiting for someone to pull

them out. The window itself was like a picture of the day framed beautifully to match the chest. It was always hard to walk past the window and not be tempted to peek out and see what might be going on outside. Once more, Ruby had to give up her favorite reading spot, her escape coming to an abrupt halt as family duties called.

Ruby hated plucking the chickens. At times she would sit there looking at the headless bird, trying to figure out if she had named this one. No matter how Ruby's momma boiled the birds—just enough for easy plucking—it was not a chore any of the girls enjoyed doing. Though the bird was dead, Ruby could not help but imagine the bird alive, and with each feather she pulled, she would feel the pain of the defenseless, headless bird. Her momma would tell her not to be silly, but Ruby could not help it. She would imagine that just the day before, it had been clucking around, happily eating corn and not harming a fly. Today, Ruby was in for a real surprise when she went out back to meet up with her sister, Ida Jane.

Ruby's momma always called her sister by both names, and if Ruby or a sibling only called her Ida, her momma would say, "Her name is Ida Jane, period. End of story." Ruby always felt that Ida Jane was the princess of the family; after all, she did have her mother's middle name. Plus, Ida Jane was

a momma's girl and did everything her momma told her to do without ever putting up a fuss. Ruby was glad that her momma had a few daughters, as they all enjoyed canning, cooking, and sewing, which pleased her momma very much.

On the other hand, Ruby did not want to have anything to do with these chores. On many occasions Ruby took advantage of her sisters to stall for time in the hope of not having to participate in whatever "girl chore" was going on at the time. Sometimes it worked! But today, Ida Jane was getting fed up with Ruby and her shenanigans.

Ruby loved all her sisters but was particularly close to Ida Jane. They had shared a room together ever since their big sister, Rilla, had married and moved to Seminole, which was not far from Oklahoma City. Ruby was three years older than Ida Jane, but even with the age difference, Ruby was interested in Ida Jane's thoughts on some matters, and most importantly, they had each other's back . . . well, most of the time.

Today would not be one of those days. Ida Jane was sitting in the green metal lawn chair, working away plucking feathers when Ruby opened the screen door.

"Ruby, why do you always have to be late when it is time to pluck the chickens? You know it is one of our Saturday morning chores."

Everyone from around the town came to Vernon's funeral. Afterward, at the Dinsmores' home, neighbors came to pay their respects and remember fun times with Vernon. Zola, Issie, and Jim appreciated the comfort the memories gave them. Eventually, everyone left, and Ruby and Ida Jane offered to clean up.

"Thank you, girls." Zola placed her hand on each of their cheeks. "But I will do it. I could use the time cleaning up to take my mind off everything."

So Ruby and Ida Jane made their way upstairs along with their brothers. Ruby hung back a bit and watched her Aunt Issie and her momma quietly pick up the family room, going through the motions to have a clean house once more. Ruby wanted to help but slowly turned around and headed up the stairs. She knew her momma would eventually retire to her room, and Issie and Abe would make their way to Robert and Zach's bedroom where they were sleeping. The boys would sleep on the couch and floor in the living room.

The window in her bedroom was open, and Ruby could hear her father and Uncle Jim out on the porch, rocking chairs creaking back and forth. She could imagine them looking up at the stars but couldn't quite make out what they were saying. She figured her Uncle Jim was not ready to go back to

the empty house at the dairy farm or even to his home for that matter.

Ruby could not sleep. She looked over at her sister who could fall asleep in a matter of minutes. Ruby snuck out of her room and tiptoed to the bathroom and quietly opened the window. She was hoping to hear more clearly what her daddy and uncle were saying, but there was only the sound of the rockers keeping the same rhythm. With a heavy heart, Ruby moved away from the window and went back to her room.

Much to her surprise, Ida Jane was awake and sitting up in bed. Ruby did not speak but just shook her head to let her know there was no news. They both slid back under the covers without saying a word.



The next day the family had to go down to the lawyer's office to hear the reading of the will. No one even knew Vernon had made a will, but he had. There they were, in the midst of their grief, in a lawyer's office. Mr. Louie Sills was the lawyer in town, and his growing law firm handled both business and family law for all the townsfolk, including Vernon, it seemed.

Mr. Sills welcomed Vernon's family and asked them to take a seat around the table in the conference room. He poured each of them a glass of water, which was his way of making his clients feel somewhat comfortable under these trying circumstances.

"I'm so sorry for your loss," he said. "I liked Vernon very much—as a friend and client."

Mr. Sills went on to explain that Vernon had come to him wanting to draw up a formal will in case something was to ever happen to him. Vernon realized most of his family would expect him to give everything to Jim, but he had some other ideas. Mr. Sills then looked around and could see no one really understood what he was trying to say. Mr. Sills took a deep breath.

"Well, let's just read the will and it all will make sense."

Everyone looked at each other as the lawyer took a sip of water and picked up the will to read.

Clearing his throat, the attorney shuffled the papers and started reading. "I, Vernon McCoy, being of sound mind and body, leave my dairy farm to my sister Zola."

"What?" She looked at Jim and Issie in shock.

Mr. Sills paused a moment to let the shock fade. "Vernon told me you would be surprised so he left an additional note to Zola for me to read. I think this will soften the blow a bit."

Dear Zola,

Don't worry. Jim will be fine. We talked about this. Jim will tell you.

Mr. Sills paused, and Jim nodded yes, as Issie and the other family members looked on. Mr. Sills continued.

Dad would want you to have the farm as well. After all, it was only left to us boys because when Dad died we were the men of the family. When we sold our store in Bower, we moved up here to be closer to you and Issie. I know you're all thinking the farm is part Jim's, as it was the inheritance from Dad, but Jim and I talked about it. I bought him out a long time ago, and that's how Jim could have his grocery store. He just continued to help me with the farm, as it was something for both of us to do together. Issie and Abe already have a farm. But don't worry, Issie, I have something for you.

Jim nodded as Zola looked at Issie. Mr. Sills took a sip of water as everyone shifted in their chairs with the awkwardness of it all. The reading of the will continued.

"Vernon left Issie \$200 and his motorcar, named Betsy. Daisy, the dairy truck, will remain on the farm for deliveries," continued the attorney.

Issie smiled. "Well, I can't imagine driving a car, but the thought is fascinating," she said. "What a lovely gesture."

Zola smiled and nodded as she watched her sister sink in her chair with embarrassment.

"Now for you, Jim. I believe Vernon has a little surprise for you too," Mr. Sills said with a slight grin.

It turned out Vernon was not a penny pincher but a saver. He never married, as he enjoyed the ladies way too much to settle down. Ruby recalled once hearing her Uncle Vernon express regret to her momma that he didn't marry the one girl he "let get away." Ruby had heard him say if he had married Margaret, he would have a slew of kids. He seemed to think because Margaret had eleven kids, that meant he would have had eleven too.

"Vernon, the choices we make determine our life!" Ruby had heard her momma say.

"I know, I know, Sis," he had said as he continued quietly rocking on the front porch.

The lawyer continued, "Before I go on with the formal part of the will, Vernon wanted Jim to have this letter."

Mr. Sills handed Jim a sealed envelope. Jim's hands began to shake as he opened it and unfolded

the letter. He started reading silently but then stopped and handed it to the lawyer. He could not bring himself to continue.

"Please read it to everyone," he said to Mr. Sills.

When Mr. Sills finished reading the amount of cash Vernon had saved for Jim, everyone was dumbfounded.

"Can you read that last part one more time?" Jim asked.

Mr. Sills read it again.

Jim, if you're reading this, then I guess I have gone to the big house in the sky. I have been saving money, hoping one day you and I could move and enjoy life in the big city. We had great plans, but looks like Mom and Dad needed me up here with them. So now it is time for you to venture out and live for both of us. Who knows? Maybe you will finally catch a cute young thing.

Everyone chuckled. It was so Vernon. He had always felt Jim devoted himself to his work and helping Vernon. Mr. Sills continued with the letter.

Issie and Zola will be fine. James and Abe are like brothers too, and they will always take good care of our sisters. So now it is your turn!

I know it is not something most men say, but since these are my last words, I reckon it will be OK for a man to say to his little brother, I love you. For that matter, I love my whole blessed family! I will be watching you from up here in the sky.

*Yours truly,
Vernon*

Silence filled the room as the words from the letter sunk in. Vernon's sisters had tears rolling down their cheeks, and the men passed their handkerchiefs to them. Everyone seemed to reach for their water at the same time, and the lawyer went back to read the final part of the formal document. Papers were signed and the legal work for the day was completed.



When they all arrived back at the Dinsmores' home, Ruby had lunch ready for them, which was an easy task with so much food brought over by the neighbors.

The grown-ups walked into the house to find the table set and iced tea poured, so all they had to do was freshen up and take a seat. The problem

was that no one was really in the eating mood, but there it was, all ready, so they just went through the motions. Ruby and Ida Jane attended to all their needs and even cleaned up, as it was the least they could do for their momma.

Issie and Abe needed to get back home and told Jim they would call and arrange to get the motorcar back to their place. They all hugged goodbye. Zola walked Issie and Abe to the car, and Ruby waved from the porch as they drove off.

"I should stop by the store," said Jim. "I'm sure Zach's got everything under control, so I'll get on up to the farm after I check in with him. After all, life goes on whether we like it or not."

He kissed his sister and told James he would speak to him soon and gave Ruby an awkward hug. Zola returned to the house and went straight to bed without saying a word. Ruby would greet any ladies who came to check on her momma and pick up a plate that they had brought for the funeral. They had been thoughtful to also have left a few fresh dishes so that Zola could be free from cooking for a few days.

By nightfall, Ruby was in her favorite reading spot when a few of her daddy's buddies came over to hear how it went with the lawyer. Ruby's ears perked up, and she made her way to the upstairs bathroom. She gently opened the window and listened to her daddy telling them what had taken place.