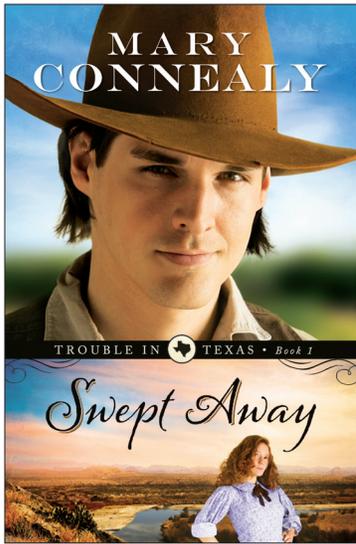




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH MARY CONNEALY



Swept Away

TROUBLE IN TEXAS - 1
by Mary Connealy

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1. Where did you get the idea for the TROUBLE IN TEXAS series?

Ideas come from all sorts of places. In this case, I got the idea while researching the KINCAID BRIDES series. My hero in book 3 of that series, *Over the Edge*, had fought in the Civil War and ended up in Andersonville Prison, a notoriously harsh Confederate prison camp. I went to check on Andersonville with the single goal of finding out the dates it was open. I only had the most meager references to the camp in *Over the Edge*, so I needed to confirm that I wasn't claiming my hero was in this prison when it was in fact closed. Four hours later, all of it spent reading everything I could find about Andersonville, my head was brimming over with ideas. (Research can be a real time-sink, but I love history, which is why I write historical romance, so I can get sucked in!) Out of that research came a reason why a group of men would become fiercely loyal friends and be willing to fight for each other even years after they'd last met. And I ended up with Callie Stone, the heroine from *Over the Edge* who went east from Texas to find her wounded brother who'd spent time in Andersonville. Callie ended up married to Seth, and now it's Luke Stone's turn to find love. His ranch has been stolen. His sister went missing. His father is dead. Luke goes home to set things right, and his friends from Andersonville come to fight at his side.

2. Where is the comedy in a romance novel about a fight with the man who killed Luke's father?

The comedy comes from the sweet little woman Luke picks up on his way to start a land war. Ruthy MacNeil got "swept away" by floodwaters and barely survived. The wagon train she was traveling with is gone, everyone dead. Luke is running away from a posse, who is chasing him because of trumped-up charges. He finds Ruthy, unconscious and floating down the river. He can't very well just leave her there in the wild country, so he grabs her and takes her along with him. Ruthy survived a raging flood, yet now she must survive a gun battle. Honestly, the little redhead just wants to get a job and support herself for once, instead of always having to support the varmints who'd dragged her along on the wagon train. But she can't avoid this war and pretty soon she's decided Luke's fight is hers too, and she wouldn't have it any other way. And even though Luke thinks it's a poor idea to make Ruthy team up with him and his friends, he's gotten to like the hardworking little spitfire real well.

3. Why do you write about cowboys?

I live on a ranch in Nebraska with my very own romantic cowboy hero. I have always been a country girl so I think I can bring a lot of authenticity to a western way of life. We don't have horses and we don't brand or lasso any cattle, but a lot of the basics are the same whether you round the cattle up with a four-wheeler or a mustang. Cows haven't changed much. I hope my rural attitudes and basic animal and land knowledge come through in the pages of my books. And it helps to have a cowboy nearby if I've got any questions.

4. What are the deeper themes of *Swept Away*?

To me, the deepest theme is loyalty. The loyalty and bonds that are closer than family, forged in hard times, forged in war. The group of men with Luke in *Swept Away* banded together in a time when they had to trust others with their lives. They learned they could trust their Regulator brothers, men who kept law and order inside a terrible prison camp and faced constant danger because of it. Their brotherhood extends now to peacetime and they bring in a new member, a woman, and Ruthy proves to be as loyal to them as they are to each other. But she also finds a kindred spirit in a woman in jeopardy, Glynna Greer, the wife of Luke Stone's cruel enemy. So Ruthy bands with the Regulators, but she also demands they protect innocent Glynna and her children, remembering vividly that there had been no one to protect her when she'd been orphaned. Of course, Luke and his Regulator friends were going to rescue Glynna anyway, without Ruthy pestering them!

Available at your local bookstore, bethanyhouse.com or by calling 1-800-877-2665.