



Silent Voices: A Family Memoir

Judith Wright Favor

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This memoir's unsparing look at Leo and Cordelia Wright has bite and gravity. Two quiet people viewed through the lens of compassion offers fresh perspectives on the multiple causes and consequences of unspoken emotion.

In 1912 the banker and the stenographer fell wildly in love. They were wed and buried her mother shortly before becoming proud parents. In 1929 Leo lost his livelihood and his pride. The prickly silences began.

In 1934 his jobless father abandoned his mother. The bank foreclosed, leaving Margaret Mary Wright homeless. Leo and Cordelia faced a tough decision. Eventually they packed his elderly mother off to Oregon's public institution for paupers. The silences increased in intensity and hostility

In 1942 Leo went to work building naval vessels in the Kaiser shipyard. A crime caused Cordelia to distrust him, dropping Leo into extended silences of longing, guilt and hoped-for reconciliation. In 1945 he was killed.

Cordelia, a widow now with two adolescents to support, sought divine assistance on how to make a living. Prayerful silence soon led to her support of orphaned Japanese schoolgirls, a radical commitment in racist post-war Oregon.

Across her lifespan my grandmother experienced shaming silence, bonding silence, confusing silence, punishing silence and, finally, revelatory silence. This memoir illustrates how the myriad facets of silence can impact personal and social relationships for harm or for healing.

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