



Running on Red Dog Road: And Other Perils of an Appalachian Childhood

Drema Hall Berkheimer

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“Mining companies piled trash coal in a slag heap and set it ablaze. The coal burned up, but the slate didn’t. The heat turned it rose and orange and lavender. The dirt road I lived on was paved with that sharp-edged rock. We called it Red Dog. My grandmother always told me, ‘Don’t you go running on that Red Dog road.’ But oh, I did.”

Gypsies, faith-healers, moonshiners, and snake handlers weave through Drema’s childhood in 1940s Appalachia after Drema’s father is killed in the coal mines, her mother goes off to work as a Rosie the Riveter, and she is left in the care of devout Pentecostal grandparents. What follows is a spitfire of a memoir that reads like a novel with intrigue, sweeping emotion, and indisputable charm. Drema’s coming of age is colored by tent revivals with Grandpa, jitterbug lessons, and traveling carnivals, and though it all, she serves witness to a multi-generational family of saints and sinners whose lives defy the stereotypes. Just as she defies her own.

Running On Red Dog Road is proof that truth is stranger than fiction, especially when it comes to life and faith in an Appalachian childhood.

Running on Red Dog Road: And Other Perils of an Appalachian Childhood Details

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From Reader Review Running on Red Dog Road: And Other Perils of an Appalachian Childhood for online ebook

Kate says

Completely heartwarming. Takes you down a red dog road into 1940-50's West Virginia and treats you to grandparents and an upbringing that will bring snippets of your own childhood back and the rest will make you smile. Written as a story about the love of her family and her upbringing, she wrote this for her grandchildren and great grandchildren but luckily, let us have a glimpse as well.

Diane says

Memories

Though I wasn't born in west Virginia, I lived in northern Appalachian country of western pa. Much of this book rang true in my heart

Gina says

I absolutely loved this book.

Drema Hall Berkheimer has written a treasure with this publication.

Drema's life during the 1940's in the Appalachians is not an easy one. Her father is killed in the mines, where nearly every man works. Demra was all of 5 months old. Working in the mines was, as we know, extremely dangerous and the miners' safety was not always a priority. To compensate Demra's mother's loss, she was paid \$1,000. No one questioned if this was fair; it just was. Iva used the \$1,000 to buy a house on the Red Dog Road. Demra's mom must find work to put food on the table. Demra is left in the care of her extremely religious grandparents. She was a spirited child (to say the least) that would test their Pentecostal sensibilities at times. Explaining why they called it Red Dog Road, Demra writes:

"Mining companies piled trash coal in a slag heap and set it ablaze. The coal burned up, but the slate didn't. The heat turned it rose and orange and lavender. The dirt road I lived on was paved with that sharp-edged rock. We called it red dog. Grandma said, Don't you go running on that red dog road. But I do." This would be typical of Demra, doing what she shouldn't be doing, ever the tomboy.

It's a wonderful read and a book I highly recommend.

Francisco Hilario says

I recently posted that I had gotten an advanced reader copy of *Running on Red Dog Road* by Drema Hall Berkheimer. Here is what I posted:

Now I am not one to read memoirs but so far this book has caused me to genuinely smile at the recollections Mrs Berkheimer has in terms of her relationship with her grandparents growing up in World War II era coal country: West Virginia. The book so far has also elicited feelings of envy and longing for the same kind of memories of grandparents that Mrs. Berkheimer has. I grew up not having grandparents. It's just not something that I can relate to but wish I had.

I'll go into it further when I finish the book.

I've finished reading the book and wanted to add upon my initial observations.

First off it is a very easy read. At under 200 pages, the book was a very quick subway ride read for me. Like I stated before, the book caused me to smile at the antics of Drema as a child and her relationship with her grandparents. Though the book is listed as a religious book, it doesn't feel like one. Granted she describes how her grandparents were heavily involved with their faith, the author doesn't pound religion on the reader. The image that the reader gets is one of a family that is satisfied and happy with what little they have and are willing to assist not only other family members but also complete strangers. That life is more than material wealth and what one would call modern conveniences.

This is especially seen in Chapter 18: *Gypsy Skirt* when Drema's Grandpa notices that crops had been missing, trampled and damaged. Here is how the scene is described:

Crouched behind the blue hydrangea bush at the corner of the porch, I was near the garden but could still scoot back to the swing if Grandpa headed in my direction. I saw his flashlight search over the cabbage and potatoes and rhubarb.

Then it froze.

Grandpa hollered, and two shapes took off towards the tall rows of corn.

A shot blasted a hole through the quiet and the shadowy forms toppled.

My knees folded and I sat down so hard it knocked the wind out of me. I was too scared to breathe until I saw one of the thieves get on his knees and start sobbing and begging Grandpa not to shoot him while the other one cowered nearby.

"Why, you're hardly more than babies," I heard Grandpa say. He knelt next to them, telling them they didn't have anything to be fearful of – he didn't plan on shooting either one of them or calling the law on them – at least not this time.

"I'm likely to do both if you boys come back here stealing out of my garden again. How old are you children anyway?"

The big boy said he was ten but his brother was only seven and wasn't allowed to be out at night. Grandpa took both boys by the hand and walk through the garden, the little one dragging a burlap bag behind.

Here is where we all can learn a lesson from the story.

"You tell me what you want, and I'll show you how to harvest so it won't damage the crop," Grandpa said.

Soon the boys filled the bag with potatoes and onions and carrots and ears of corn. Grandpa showed them

how to tie their sack in the middle of a long pole so they could share the heavy load on the way home.

“You go straight home and don’t be dallying along the way. And you remember that we have us a gentleman’s agreement: You are welcome on my property anytime as long as you knock on my door first. Get along with you now.”

Reading this story from the perspective of someone living in a very “me, me, me” era and in an ultra materialistic society, it really makes one hark back to the simpler times based in the book. While our world has become smaller through technology, we’ve become more impersonal and skeptical of our fellow man. Would someone today be as willing to teach and be as forgiving as Drema’s Grandpa was towards the boys? Would someone today shoot in the air rather than shooting at the dark figures?

We live in a different and some might say a more dangerous time. This is also seen in an early part of the book when the family helps to feed random hobos that come through East Beckley, West Virginia in the Appalachians. What are the odds that someone today lets a random stranger into their home and not only feeds them but also gives them food to take with them. It really makes you wonder.

To me the book is a look into the paintings of Norman Rockwell as told by one of the figures in said painting. The sense of a simpler America is seen in the down to earth words of someone who grew up in the World War II era as the daughter of a Rosie the Riveter. Reading about the acts and words of Drema’s grandparents will make the reader wonder if they in fact are living life to the best of their abilities as it refers to their fellow man. Trust me, as the skeptic that I am I felt the same way.

I do have one complaint with the book. Well it’s not really a complaint but the book is peppered with scenes of food being prepared and cooked by Drema’s Grandma whose imagery made my mouth water at times. If you read this Drema Hall Berkheimer, please include some recipes in a later volume.

I recommend this book to anyone who is just looking to read a feel good, down to earth story of childhood, family life and good old fashioned living.

<http://historysisco.tumblr.com/post/1...>

Mary says

My first religious publisher imprint. I was about a third of the way through, went to pick the book up, and saw the Zondervan icon on the back, and if I weren't enjoying the book so much, would've stopped at that, like a vampire faced with a head of stinky garlic.

I'm glad I kept reading. Berkheimer has created a lively, warm homage to her Pentecostal grandparents, who raised her and her sister and brother in East Beckley, WVA while their widowed mother was employed in NYC as a Rosie the Riveter.

I was especially taken with all those old-timey food descriptions. So much so that I sent away to Missouri for some special pole beans just so I can make Leather Breeches (dried green beans, which are soaked and boiled for hours. Like I have all this time to do this!)

Great stories, nothing new here, just a wonderful energetic writer. Her descriptions of her grandparents made me think of one of my great uncles and his wife. Very house proud, grew beautiful gardens, dressed impeccably, ALWAYS the first in the door at Sunday service.

I've been handing this book out to my old ladies at the library, must be getting talked around. All the copies

are out, maybe we should buy more.
Good luck to Berkheimer.

Ellen says

2.5. A series of vignettes from a 1940s Appalachian girlhood. The author's choice to tell her story from a child's point of view and with a child's vocabulary naturally limits its scope. This one will come down to personal taste. The molasses covered Hee Haw hoke did not appeal to me, but others will no doubt find it charming.

Jennifer Destafano says

Put simply, I adored this book. It reminded me of Sally Morgan's novel, *My Place*, and I consider this high praise indeed. I was totally unaware that it was published under a Christian imprint, but frankly I didn't really notice anything overtly preachy or prosthyletizing that would have tipped me off. The narrative voice is at once childlike and sage, the storytelling often giggle-out-loud funny, and all in all, I found the author's style deeply enjoyable.

Reading this book, I felt like myself at Little Drema's age, sitting on my grandmother's lap while she told stories of her childhood and that of my father and aunts. There is quite a bit of subtext regarding class, gender, fear of or prejudice toward outsiders, and so forth. However it is only seen in glimpses through the eyes of a sheltered little girl from a relatively comfortable middle class white family. These aren't topics that are thoroughly explored, but I wouldn't expect them to be in this context.

I recently finished *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger, and this was an interesting juxtaposition. There is no cataclysmic event that forces the narrator to engage with the concerns of adults, such as in *Ordinary Grace* or *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Maybe to some that makes this book less interesting or less worthy, but I don't think this detracts from its value.

While the main characters (Grandma and Grandpa) serve as the moral authority and one could find little fault with their actions or words, which would normally irk me, coming from the very subjective perspective of a granddaughter, I can't find fault with their treatment by the author, either. It's pure love, framed by wistfulness and loss, and filtered through decades of wisdom and perspective earned through simply living life (in no small part in the shadow of their example). So, I am simply taking it for what it is and appreciating its artfulness and beauty without comparison to weightier works.

The story follows a family led by devout Pentecostal grandparents, so many of the lessons taught by the matriarch and patriarch touch upon what it is to exist and interact with others in this world in a manner befitting a devout believer, demonstrating what might be called true Christian charity and grace. (Again, not in any way did I correlate this with the category of Christian literature, so it is delicately treated - or I am just dense!?) While I am not religious, these are lessons that transcend any specific religious text or denomination. And again, I am reminded of my grandmother, who was a devout Catholic and active in the church as far back as my memory stretches, up until the final years of her life.

To wrap this up, I recommend this book for anyone who needs a little escape from the vitriolic grind that has

become daily life in the world (at least in the US), who needs reminded that there remains in that same world much warmth and gentleness, strong and enduring family bonds, and stories told by loving grandmothers. Maybe with biscuits and gravy on the side. (One warning, this book will make you hungry!)

Connie D says

I loved the voice of this memoir about a childhood living with pentecostal grandparents in West Virginia during and after WWII. The story is told from the author's childhood perspective, but with the added humor of an adult looking back on the craziness and sweetness of life. The details of life in a "simpler" time are quickly and beautifully included; mostly this is about a child learning about herself and relationships and an adult returning to her roots. This book snuck up on me -- it's certainly not action-packed, but absolutely held my attention and heart.

I recommend listening to it. Excellent narrator.

Jessaka says

What a delightful, warmhearted book about a family living in the the Appalachian Mountains or so I thought for the longest time. The author, Drema Hall Berkheimer, paints a romantic view of her family life back in the 1940s, and who's to say that it wasn't like that? Her grandfather was a Pentecostal preacher, a word I could never spell but one that I am familiar with from my own childhood. If it were not for the preaching in this book, I would have loved being part of her family, but now I would have rather been in Earl Hammer's family, Hammer, who wrote for the TV series, The Walton's. It has never been the poverty that scared me; it was always the preachin.'

The story takes place in coal mining country, where men live short lives due to having black lung. I knew a woman that lived next door to me in California whose husband had black lung and skin cancer on his ears. Perhaps, but I don't recall, he had worked in the fields at one time, so the caner. I told him to take vitamin E internally for his black lung and to spread it on his skin cancer. His ears had been eaten up by surgery, and he was getting ready to have more removed. When he finally went back to his doctor, both were cured. Not saying that it will cure everyone, just saying that that is what happened.

Now for the fun moments in the book: Everyone had a Victory Garden, and I think we all still should. They grew vegetables, fruit trees, grape vineyards, berry bushes, and then cows for milk and butter, chickens for eggs and supper and pigs for bacon, ham, and pork chops. And all of this in their neighborhood, where houses grew in along side of each other, so not in the mountains as I thought, unless it was a mountain town. Anyway, I think we should still be allowed to do this. Times have changed; cities have ordinances. People don't like roosters crowing or cows getting out and ruining other people's yards or leaving stinky cow pies. I would like this. We lived in town where I grew up in the 50s, and we had a vegetable garden, an apricot and a plum tree, chickens, rabbits, eggs, and almost two baby lambs, but they died, one in my arms, and I asked God, "Why?" He didn't answer. I wasn't baptized.

And after telling us about her garden, she turns to telling us about the Pentecostal way. The woman wore long dresses and long hair, and no jewelry, much less that stinky perfume that makes me get up and move away from the offender. Her grandmother used to braid her hair and use sugar/water to keep it in place. Who would have ever thought of that? I would have thought that she would have gotten ants in her hair. Actually,

this was the good part about the religion. I rather agree that natural God given beauty is better than all that makeup, and I love those long dresses, but I wear pants because I can. I was at the homeless shelter the other day doing volunteer work, and there was another elderly woman helping out. She had on an apron and a long skirt and looked like a pioneer woman. I told her that I liked her dress, and she said that she always wore them. She was quiet, and as I learned later, she was a nun. Usually, if I see a woman dressed like that around here they are New Baptists. Can't tell the Pentecostals apart anymore.

And dressing like this is as close as I wish to get to any evangelical church. I have been there. My brother's friend was a Pentecostal, and I went with him to his friend's church, and I watched them put up felt pictures of hell fire on a felt covered board to make them stick, and I thought to take a hose, put it in the ground and put out the fire. And one day I tried putting a water hose down a hole in the ground, but I never reached hell because they continue to preach about it. When I was a little older I got to sit inside the main church. I saw them raising their hands in praise and rolling around on the floor, and I just couldn't get with it. My mom never made us go to church, except on Easter day and Christmas, so I was saved.

Then Grandpa went to preachin,' and I began to feel a little agitated, so I moved on, just as I always have in my life when it came to religion. A little goes a long ways.

Ever wonder why fruit trees were once painted white at the bottom around the trunk? That was whitewash that kept the boring beetles away. I once read about planting garlic around them, and I have done that. Now-a-days they just spray the h*** out of them which poisons everything, even you.

They bring up her grandfather's black lung disease, and I am back to thinking of my miracle cure, actually, Adelle Davis', but then just as quickly as that comes into my mind, we are listening to her grandfather preach in church again, and then we are dyeing hard-boiled eggs, coloring them for Easter, and I think of how we did that as kids, and how my mother bought us matching dresses for the one time of the year that we went to the Baptist church together. Then back to Drema's story about their Easter baskets with chocolate bunnies and jelly beans and those marshmallow chicks. None of these things tasted great, but at least it was candy. I still like seeing the marshmallow yellow chicks in packages at the stores during Easter.

And then hobos came to visit their house. The hobos had it marked, and they always fed them. I wonder if they got bible lessons as well, just as they do at our homeless shelter, which I never have to listen to, thank God. But at times I have had to look at the decorated Jesus t-shirt and the large Jesus belt buckle that a certain person there wore for a while. In this book they fed the hobo's peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, which is what they do at our shelter too, but they get much more than that, but many of the homeless don't really like peanut butter and jelly; they prefer baloney and cheese. I grew up loving peanut butter and jelly, and when we lived in Porterville, CA, I once made one for a hobo that knocked on our door.

Speaking of hobos: Her grandpa once handed her a poem:

A hobo's prayer

Smokedusting

Wanderlusting

Rails click by below

Heard them once

Heard them twice

Calling me to go

Stew ain't half bad
Company's fair
Not a soul I know
Been here once
Could be twice
Time for me to go

They's kids somewhere
Call me dad
Names I hardly know
Seen them once
Or maybe twice
Still I've got to go

Down south the sun god
Shines like god
Here it's about to snow
I been there once
Or was it twice
Oh Lord I loved it so

When heaven turns the cage birds free
I watch them from below
Just one more time
Or maybe twice
Sweet Jesus let me go.

Amen.

One day when Drema and her grandmother were walking down a path, they heard some singing, "'Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus." So they went to check it out when all the sudden they came upon a sign that said, "Keep away survivors will be shot." But a little further away, on the church door it said, "All true believers welcome." She liked the welcome sign. They learned that this church was one of those snake loving ones where they played with poisonous snakes and would have even used a black mamba if they had one. I want to tell them to run. Don't want anyone testing my trust in Jesus with any poisonous snake.

And then there was a time when she had to save her sister from drowning. How often does this happen in life? It seems to me that we should all really have to learn how to swim. I once saved my sister from drowning, and I have had to save myself a few times, as I was never a great swimmer. My brother recently told me that when he was 11 years old he went to the Shandon, CA reservoir with a friend. They walked out on the pipe that had a spigot in the middle, and when the water turned on it knocked them both into the water. His friend was taken by the current to the edge of the reservoir, but since neither of them knew how to swim, his friend got on his bicycle and road back home, got his brother, who then got on his bike and road back. My brother knew how to float on his back, and while he went under a few times, his friend got back in time. He never told our parents about it, and neither did the author of his book. Who wants to get into trouble? If our parents were alive, I would tell on him now. We used to like to get each other in trouble.

And here is one I forgot. If you put eggs in a pan of water, the ones that float to the top are rotten. Toss them out. But what are we making here? A molasses cake. My friend, who grew up in the Appalachians, said that

this cake is like pancakes with molasses and applesauce between the layers. No thank you, but if it sounds good to you, here is a recipe.

Appalachian Molasses Stack Cake

4 ¼ c. flour
1 t. salt
½ t. baking soda
1 t. baking powder
1 t. cinnamon
½ t. allspice
6 ounces butter, softened
1 ¼ c. sugar
¾ c. molasses
2 eggs
½ c. milk
3 c. applesauce
½ c. molasses
2 c. powdered sugar, sifted

Enough molasses and milk to make icing

Combine the dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Cream the butter and sugar with an electric mixer. Add the eggs, molasses, and milk to the creamed butter and sugar. Mix again. Add the creamed mixture to the bowl with the dry ingredients. Stir well by hand to combine.

Wrap and refrigerate the dough for 30 minutes to an hour. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Divide the dough in six equal parts. Unless you have six round cake pans, you'll have to bake the layers a few at a time. (You can use an 8 or 9 inch cake pan. Line the bottoms of the cake pans with parchment paper. Roll out each section of the cake batter in the cake pans. Bake at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes, keeping an eye on them. They'll bake a little faster or slower depending on what size cake pan you're using. Set each layer aside to cool as you bake the remaining sections.

Once all the layers are baked and cooled, you're ready to assemble your stack cake. Combine the three cups of applesauce with the 1/2 cup of molasses. Spread 1/2 c. applesauce/molasses mixture over the top of each layer as you stack the layers on top of each other.

When you're finished, spread a thin layer of applesauce/molasses all over the top and sides of the cake. Wrap the cake and refrigerate for 24-48 hours. The waiting time allows the applesauce/molasses mixture to infuse the layers, making them moist and tender.

Before serving, prepare the molasses icing. Add enough molasses and milk to the sifted powdered sugar to make an icing you can pour. Drizzle over the top of the cake and down the sides.

Elyssa DeAngulo says

This story creates great visuals and allows the reader to experience the history of the Appalachia through the eyes of someone who lived it. The reader allows us to see from both a young and old point of view.

Stacy says

Running on Red Dog Road is the story of author Drema Hall Berkheimer's idiosyncratic childhood in 1940's West Virginia. Filled with odd and yet lovable characters like the hobos that visited and worked for a free meal, the gypsies that set up camp in town each year, and the snake charming church her grandmother makes her swear to avoid, Berkheimer's memoir is an unusual blend of bizarre, hilarious and heartwarming memories. Reading much like a real life rendition of *The Truth According to Us*, *Running on Red Dog Road* is infused with the smell of the savory cooking of Berkheimer's grandmother, and the patient instruction and strength of her preacher grandfather. Though her father passed away when Berkheimer was young, her mother was alive, but for much of Berkheimer's narrative she was away working as a riveter in the war effort. Untouched by the war aside from the absence of her mother, Berkheimer's childhood was happy despite the odd little touches of the area.

I admit, I wasn't sure what to expect from this narrative. Some Christian narratives I've read in the past have tended towards preachiness, however this one was full of substance and yet such a fun and lovable little book. Berkheimer has a gift for a yarn and her touches of humor in the childish interpretations she had of everyday life were truly hilarious. The family and friends she paints a picture of are larger than life and so lovable the reader will want to revisit them in later readings. Hopefully Berkheimer has more memories she can share in a future book. A fun and humorous read with a lot of heart.

Disclaimer: I received an ARC of this book from the publisher on Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

Julie Davis says

This book makes me think of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Or maybe I'm thinking of *Tom Sawyer*. Although these are vignettes of Appalachian life instead of a novel, the reader is carried into 1940s West Virginia through a mischievous child's vivid memories of what was then "everyday" life. Drema's stories pull us into her world with turns of humor, poignancy, love and discovery.

Above all, I came away loving her Grandma and Grandpa. Their common sense, resilience, ingenuity, and steadfast faith were the anchors of the Drema's life. They provide the anchors for the book too, and the underlying themes which make the book much more than simply the sum of its parts. One of my favorite chapters was when the gypsies came to town and Grandpa caught two of their children who'd been raiding the vegetable garden and henhouse.

The big boy said he was ten but his brother was only seven and wasn't allowed to be out at night. Grandpa took both boys by the hand and walked through the garden, the little one dragging a burlap bag behind.

"You tell me what you want, and I'll show you how to harvest so it won't damage the crop," Grandpa said.

Soon the boys filled the bag with potatoes and onions and carrots and ears of corn. Grandpa showed them how to tie their sack in the middle of a long pole so they could share the heavy load on the way home.

"A load is always lighter if it's shared. I want you to remember that. You want more, you knock and I'll give you what can be spared. I want to show you something else before you leave," he said, leading the boys over to where Queenie was tied.

He unhooked the leash, and Queenie, grateful for freedom, ran to the boys and started jumping up. Grandpa gave a hand signal and the dog sat down, watching Grandpa and waiting.

"This dog is part of our family, and I won't stand for her being tormented. She wants to be your friend. Go on over there now and get acquainted with her." ...

Every week or so after, always just before dawn, we heard a tapping at the front door, getting a little louder if Grandpa didn't hurry down. He pulled pants and suspenders over his long johns and went out to help his new friends fill their bag. Grandma followed him downstairs and put a pot of coffee on the stove. Sometimes she gave the boys a sack of oatmeal cookies or a pint of damson preserves, and a time or two she gave them a basket of eggs.

We never had another chicken disappear.

Running on Red Dog Road shows us a slice of life that doesn't exist any more, while reminding us that such a life is still right here to be grasped — in our families, friends, and the things we share along the way.

I received a Kindle version of this book from NetGalley. My opinion is my own. I'll be buying this in print for myself and as gifts. I know I'll be rereading this one.

HBalikov says

"Scratch any West Virginian a few layers down and you're bound to find a vein of coal. Yours runs deep. You were born in a coal camp at Penman, West Virginia, on November 17, 1939. I helped you into this world. Good thing. By the time the doctor came you'd been looking around all big-eyed for more than an hour."

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Remember, *The Waltons*? I thought I was getting a biographical insight into coal-mining West Virginia, and instead I got *The Waltons*, a long-running television series about a rural Virginia family during the period covering circa 1950 to circa 1960.

Drema's narrative of growing up in coal-mining West Virginia covers the Forties and maybe a little more. She is the youngest of three children and one of the book's charms is that Berkheimer's series of memories are told as a child of that age would do so. We get all the impulsiveness, sibling conflicts, and childhood wonder that was packed into those years. The picture on the cover shows the author with her sister, Vonnice, and their grandfather.

The Hall family's leaders were: her grandfather, a coal miner and Pentecostal preacher; and her grandmother,

who ran the house and sold eggs and managed the money. Her father was killed in a mining accident that allowed them to make a down payment on a house big-enough for the family and her mother was in and out of the area as work was hard to find. It was a tough life, but not without its pleasures and we get a well-sketched sense of: what was on the table for breakfast, dinner and supper; how people died and got married; what happened when the carnival or the gypsies came to town; etc.

A red dog road was made from the tailings from the mines and it was better road than just dirt though it fell short of blacktop. Running on red dog road was one of the things kids did back then to go to school or houses of friends. The car was kept for “necessary” transportation.

Part of the fun of reading this were the local words that were sprinkled throughout such as “swarpping,” “rickrack,” “spraddled,” “peplum,” “walleyed,” and “skint-up.” Another related delight were the family’s sayings including: “Wash down far as Possible, wash up far as Possible, then wash Possible.” Some things just made me laugh as when they encountered Tolerable Thigpen. “Like to interduce my eldest, Virginia Thigpen, he said, nodding toward the young woman standing next to him. “She was named Virginia after her sainted mother, who was called Virgie, God rest her, so we called her Ginny. Then she give this baby she’s holdin’ the name Virginia. She’s called Nia.”

This was a pleasant read that helped to flesh out my fascination with lives of ordinary people. It did only a little to help me understand what the current generations of people in rural West Virginia think about their lives and what their hopes and dreams might be.

Kathleen Rodgers says

Every once in a while, a voice comes along that makes you yearn for a childhood you never lived. Author Drema Hall Berkheimer invites you to skip along with her, big sis Vonnie, and best friend Sissy into the coal mining hills and hollers of West Virginia, at a time when gypsies and hobos were as common as doctors who made house calls.

My husband is a longtime fan of Drema's work. Tom calls *Running On Red Dog Road* "The Waltons meet *Little House on the Prairie* told with Mark Twain's humor."

We both highly recommend this book.

Drema and I met at the The Writer's Garret? in 2008. I fell in love with this book the moment she started reading those early chapters in critique.

Kathleen M. Rodgers, award-winning author of *Johnnie Come Lately*

Stephen says

thanks to netgalley and the publishers for a free copy for an open and honest review.

found this book very interesting but didn't really stand out though maybe it was the language used to portray

her childhood and in parts felt very run of the mill
