



Flying Time

Suzanne North

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Winner of the 2015 Saskatchewan Book Awards University of Regina Book of the Year Award

In 1939, Kay Jeynes, a lively, ambitious young working-class woman, goes to work for the only Japanese businessman in town, the elderly, wealthy, Oxford-educated Mr. Miyashita. Despite differences in their age, race, and class, a friendship develops between them in the peaceful vacuum of Mr. Miyashita's office. But outside, on the city streets, a dark chapter in North American history is taking shape. As war looms, relations between Canada and Japan grow steadily worse. Travel outside North America becomes impossible for Mr. Miyashita, so he asks Kay to cross the Pacific Ocean, even as the Imperial Navy is manoeuvring into position for the attack on Pearl Harbor. He sends her to Hong Kong on the famous Pan American Clipper to collect a precious family heirloom. On this journey, Kay commits some seemingly small sins of omission. But in the paranoid climate of the times, these little white lies put Mr. Miyashita at risk of being arrested as a spy.

Told through the eyes of an older Kay, and set during the turbulent and racially charged times of the Second World War, *Flying Time* is a triumphant story of love and adventure, the impetuosity of youth and the regrets of age.

Flying Time Details

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Author : Suzanne North

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From Reader Review Flying Time for online ebook

Sandy says

Great book.

Sheila says

Recommended on CBC as a slice of time telling of 1939, the eroding relationship with Japan, suspicion of Japanese in Canada and the friendship between a wealthy, educated Japanese businessman and his typist from the secretary pool. The secretary goes to Japan for the businessman. Written as memoirs by an 80 year old woman in rehab.

Stephen Graham King says

Absolutely exquisite. I'm not sure I can even find words. It's the story of a woman in a nursing home remembering her friendship with a Japanese businessman; How he set her off on a grand adventure and changed her life. So much heart in it, a big, bruised, gloriously open heart. It's one of those books that makes me wish I could write something that good.

Jack Heath says

Synopsis: in 1939, a young working-class woman, goes to work for a Japanese businessman. He sends her on a mission.

Beatrix says

An intriguing setting: Calgary 1939 at the eve of WWII when Kay, a young women born and raised in this prairie town, gets the opportunity to work as a secretary for the only Japanese business man far and wide and to even travel overseas on his behalf. What a contrast! Calgary is far from the multicultural global city we see today, Japanese and Canadian culture did not mix well.

The story is told from the perspective of an aging Kay who today lives in a seniors home. At first I thought, "oh no, not again!", fearful that this all-too-popular narrative device would be just another unnecessary subplot which could only deter from the real story I wanted to read. But I was pleasantly surprised that the older Kay brought not only another exciting layer of contrasts to the book but also a healthy dose of humor.

Author Suzanne North, also born and raised in Calgary and now living in Saskatoon, brings this time to life by creating a very real sense of place and engaging and likable characters. Kay comes from a tight-knit family. She might be a bit naïve but is ready to embrace life and the world beyond her daily job as a typist

for a local coal company. At first, her parents aren't exactly overjoyed when she starts a new position with Mr. Miyashita. Racist attitudes abound in Calgary and are normal for them as well. But they eventually become friends with the Japanese business man and his wife who have been calling Canada their home for over 30 years.

I loved the seemingly effortless writing style, the feeling of having a grandmother narrating her life story. I loved the study of contrasts, of pre-war and today's Calgary, the young and naïve Kay and her much older well-educated boss, Japanese and Canadian culture, the wealthy and working class ... all in the end building a perfect story arc and one of my favourite books of the year.

Marian says

Thoroughly enjoyed it.

Ad?le says

Well told, engaging. Humour and atmosphere. Totally enjoyable.

Rebecca McNutt says

Flying Time is the story of two unlikely but close friends who find themselves caught up in the harrowing ordeal of war. Set in Canada and going across the Pacific all the way to Hong Kong, this book is not only a suspenseful adventure but also a wonderful story of the meaning of companionship and sacrifice for those you care about.

Jane Glen says

I can't think of a thing I would change about this book. The juxtaposition between time frames is impeccably done. The characters are developed with care and empathy. The changing political times are beautifully crafted. And I caught myself laughing out loud a couple of times! This is not just a winner in my books; I hope that it will be nominated for other prestigious awards.

Leslie says

An engaging read that takes you back to pre-World War II Calgary. All the familiar landmarks are enjoyable to revisit but at the same time unsettling knowing what is to come...

Jane says

Where I got the book: review copy provided by publisher. This review first appeared on the Historical Novel Society website.

On the eve of the Second World War, Kay Jeynes volunteers to transfer out of her typist's job to work for Japanese businessman Hero Miyashita. The relationship between the sophisticated Japanese gentleman and the naïve working-class Canadian rapidly turns into that of mentor and disciple, and Kay's family and friends learn to view the Miyashitas with less prejudice than is the norm in the Calgary of the Thirties. But war is looming, and in the wider Canadian context, prejudice against the Japanese is fast turning to fear and hatred.

Flying Time is an example of what literary historical fiction does well: provides a snapshot of a time and place through the small evolutions in relationships in a clearly defined context. North's evocation of Calgary in 1939 is masterly, a clear sketch that is never too heavy on detail. Her writing style is fluid, chatty, and engaging, and the pages of this novel flew by for me. I was not initially thrilled by the framing device for Kay's reminiscences, a memoir writing class in a nursing home, but North made it work through Kay's awareness of the poignancy of old age and the fleeting nature of youth.

Personally, I could have enjoyed the story without Kay's journey to Hong Kong, even though I found the depiction of international travel by flying boat fascinating. I felt that the really engaging aspect of Flying Time was the delineation of the relationships that built up from a chance meeting, enhanced by the poignancy of historical hindsight.
