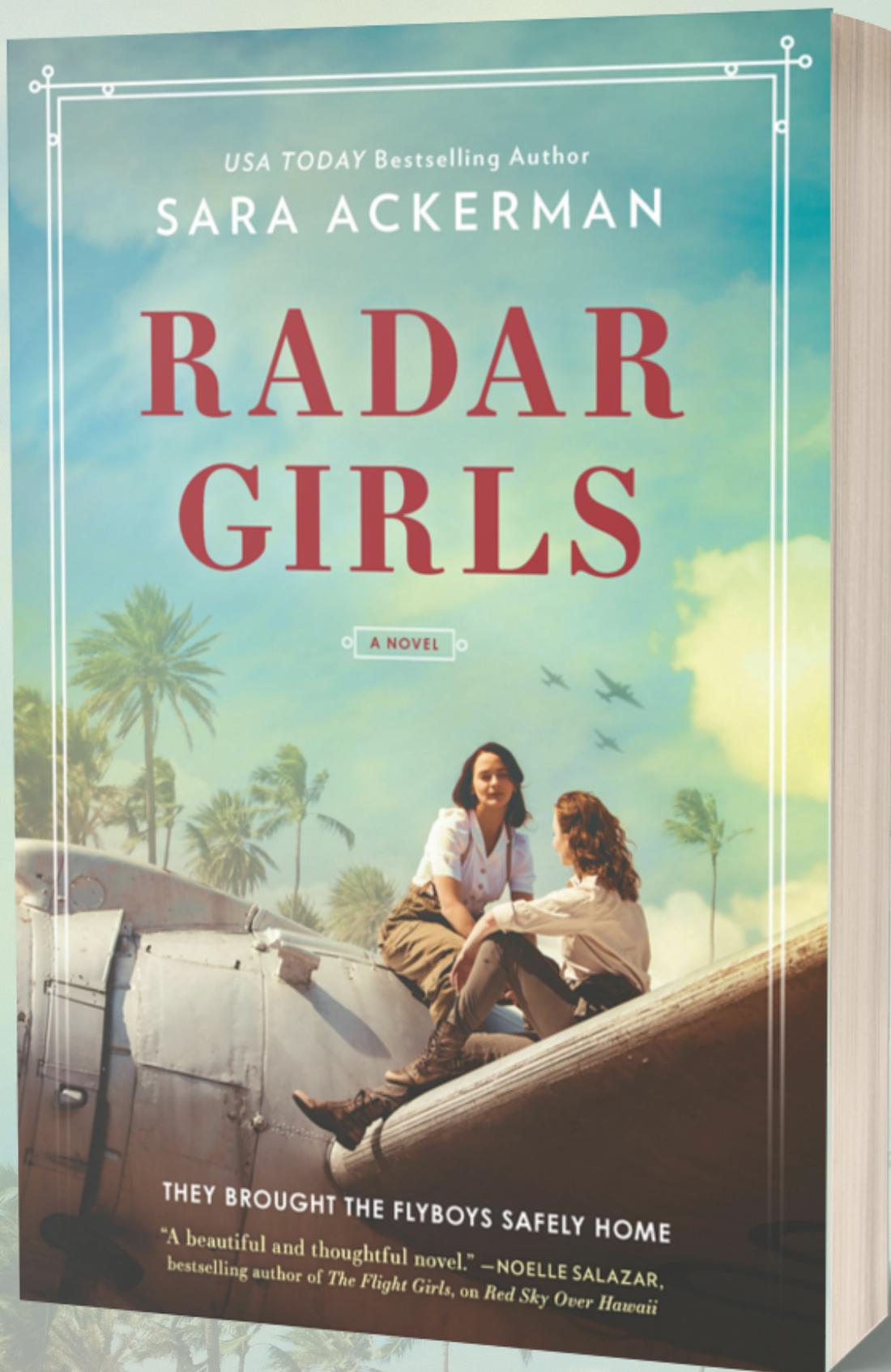


Book Club Kit





Dear Reader:

As a young girl growing up in the early 70s in Hawaii, the war still seemed fresh in everyone's mind. I was raised on the stories of my grandparents and parents, who lived in the islands when war came to our doorstep. They spoke of soldiers camped out in their living room on weekends, of nearly getting shot for walking down the street at night, and of hiding out in a lava tube when they first got wind of the attack. Back then, no one knew how the war would end. Fear and paranoia ran rampant, but so did courage and strength and hope.

I stumbled upon the idea for Radar Girls while researching for *The Lieutenant's Nurse* and was surprised I had never heard of the Women's Air Raid Defense (WARD), which was formed in the Hawaiian Islands by emergency Executive Order 9063 immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. These women were sworn to secrecy and only told that they would be performing critical secret work for the army. More importantly, that they would be responsible for protecting their home and their country. Radar stations and command centers were formed on every island and staffed with local women, military wives, and recruits from the Mainland. Code name: Rascal.

As much as possible, I tried to weave their real stories into my book--about training in 'Iolani Palace, hiding out in flooded air raid shelters, and plotting husbands as they left for battle, some never to return. These women were courageous, intelligent, patriotic, fun, and full of heart. They were given a crash course in radar and codes, taught complicated calculations, and shown how to guide pilots into blacked out runways or talk them home when they were lost. As soon as I discovered their story, I knew I had to write a novel about them so that the rest of the world would know what national treasures they were. I only hope I have done them justice.

Happy Reading!

Sara Ackerman

A Night in Hawai'i

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The WARDees answered the call of duty during a very intense time, just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the fear of invasion was real. If asked, do you think you would have stayed in Hawai'i and joined, or would you have preferred to evacuate to the Mainland? What other ways did women contribute to the war effort?
2. Did you know about the Women's Air Raid Defense program prior to reading this book? If so, how did you hear about it? If not, were you surprised to learn about it? Did you learn anything new about the attack on Pearl Harbor and its aftermath?
3. The four women, Daisy, Fluff, Betty and Lei, all came from different backgrounds, and yet became the best of friends. Which of the four characters do you identify with the most? Why? Do you have friends who have bonded through challenging life experiences?
4. The WARDees replaced men in an active war zone and faced plenty of skepticism, discrimination and outright hostility because they were women. How do you think they handled it? Have you ever encountered something similar in your own life? How challenging is it to work in a male-dominated field?
5. War is known to bring out the worst in people, but it can also bring out the best, and stories of courage and hope and survival abound. How did the characters in the book react to the pressures of war on their doorstep? Do you have any family stories of living through or fighting in the war?
6. How do you think becoming a member of the Women's Air Raid Defense shaped Daisy's journey?
7. Hawai'i was under martial law through much of WWII, which included blackouts, curfew, and rationing. How do you think that would have affected you? What food and drink would you have the hardest time living without?
8. Do you think it will be possible for Daisy to forgive Mr. Montgomery? What about her mother? How much did Louise's mental illness affect the rest of her life?
9. After Dunn assaulted Fluff on their date, it takes the women catching Dunn in the act in order for Nixon to finally do something about it. How else could they have handled the situation? How would that same behavior have been treated today? Has much changed?
10. What similarities do you see between life during wartime and life during the COVID-19 pandemic?
11. What did you think of the ending and the final flight? Have you ever been to the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor? Or other war memorials either national or international? Which ones? How did you feel being there?

An Interview With The Author

1. What was your favorite part of writing Radar Girls?

That's easy: getting to know the women who were real WARDees and then later getting to know my characters and watching them come to life on the page. When I first read the book, *Shuffleboard Pilots: The History of the Women's Air Raid Defense in Hawaii*, which was compiled by former WARDees, I was in tears. It is so full of amazing photos and anecdotes of what these women lived through. Some fun, remarkable, some heartbreaking. It was extremely moving to read about the sacrifices they made and how they held each other up throughout the whole war. Those were not easy times, and they rose to the occasion and then some. They also maintained a great sense of humor, which I suspect helped them through. I knew I wanted to use their stories, but also to create my own characters. Which is exactly what happened. I truly love these ladies!

2. How long did it take you to write Radar Girls?

About 9 months for the first draft, which is almost double the time it usually takes. Partly because I was teaching two new classes at HPA (one of them being novel writing) and partly because of the pandemic. In the early months of 2020, it was very hard to stay focused on my writing, and I was only able to eke out a couple hundred words a day, if that. After those 9 months, there was a lot of back and forth with my agent (who reads and gives me feedback for edits) and then my editor. Even now, I just got some notes from the proofreader. These people all make the book so much better! A good editor is worth his or her weight in gold.

3. What's one thing you wish for readers to walk away from your book with?

With every book, it's a little bit different, but with this one, I would love it if people came away with a greater appreciation for the importance of friendship. Life is always better with friends, and I've been blessed in my life to have a wonderful group of them.

4. How do you balance fact and fiction when it comes to writing historical fiction?

It can be tricky. I do my best to be historically accurate. I spend a lot of time making sure I have the events, the language, the place, the food and those kinds of details as real as possible. This is where books, interviews, old photos, and films come in handy. Every time I write one of my WWII novels, I am faced with the task of trying to put myself in the shoes of characters who were living through experiences that I can only imagine. The best way to do that, I've found, is by hearing the stories firsthand from survivors.

Also, I am generally placing fictitious characters into real world settings and turning them loose. I have to imagine a fair amount of their day to day experience, and that can be hard. With *Radar Girls*, it was also challenging because I had to really dig deep to learn about radar and plotting and aviation, and then figure out how to write it in a believable and interesting way. I think that's another reason this book took so much longer to write.

5. Your books are always so transporting. How do you write about setting so well?

Writing about Hawai'i is easy because most places I write about, I've been to. I have always been very aware of my surroundings, so when I'm writing, it's easy to imagine myself in the setting and conjure up the sights, smells and sounds in my mind. Even though my books are set in the 1940s, nature is still nature. Also, I spend time visiting the places I'm writing about, that way everything is fresh. I'm a sucker for books with good imagery.

6. What is your favorite part of the writing process? How about the most challenging?

I love the feeling of being surprised as I go. When new characters or ideas pop up along the way, it's similar to that OOOOHHH feeling you get when reading. I love wondering what happens next, and the only way to find out is to keep writing.

The hardest part? The beginning, the middle and the end, lol. Seriously, though. Starting off is scary and intimidating, but also exciting. And then there is always that middle section that feels like it's sagging. I think to myself, yikes how I am I going to keep this story going for another forty thousand words? And then when I approach the ending, I wonder how on earth I am going to wrap up all these loose ends and give the reader that soul satisfying ending. But I have faith in the process, and know I can come back later and work on it. Having a great editor helps, too. In my experience, editors take the book to another level.

7. What do you do when you aren't writing?

I am definitely a nature girl (as you could probably guess). I grew up on Oahu and spent every possible moment in the ocean, swimming or surfing or paddling Hawaiian outrigger canoes. I also love yoga and hiking and am a plant/bird nerd. At night, you'll often find me stargazing (the Hawaiians developed a brilliant ocean navigation system) on the beach, in my yard, or high on Mauna Kea in a secret spot. I also love to pick berries and fruit, and bake pies (hence the idea for Island of Sweet Pies and Soldiers, my first book). Animals are also a big part of my life, and I have a dog and three cats. My dream is to have an animal sanctuary someday. and last but not least, I love to read.

8. What are three things people may not know about you?

I hold an acupuncture license, I used to be a winning outrigger canoe paddler, and my middle name is Kanoelanihuli, Hawaiian for mist of the swirling heavens - a mountain top near my birthplace.

9. How many unpublished manuscripts do you have?

Four! I wrote three books before Island of Sweet Pies and Soldiers—all set in Hawai'i, none historical (though one has a shortish 1945 timeline woven in). I also wrote a novel between Sweet Pies and The Lieutenant's Nurse, but since it was not historical, my publisher has not picked it up (yet). I love all of my books and though they need varying amounts of work, I hope to get them out into the world one day.

10. When did you first realize you wanted to become an author?

There have been times throughout my life when I finished a book and thought, I want to be able to write one! I've always loved reading and writing, and used to compile books of my poems and give them out as gifts every year for Christmas. But it wasn't until more recently—about 2011—that I sat down and started writing my first novel. I was hooked right away, but I didn't land an agent and publishing deal until my fourth one (Island of Sweet Pies and Soldiers). When I started, I knew it would be a long process. I had a Post-It note that said Patience & Perseverance stuck to my door frame. That was my mantra.

A Night in Hawai'i

MUSIC

Hawaiian Slack Key guitar is one of the finest traditions of acoustic guitar in the world. Gabby Pahinui, Makaha Sons of Ni'ihau, Ledward Kaapana, and Rev. Dennis Kamakahi are but a few of the best. Get yourself in the island mood with the Slack Key Guitar Radio on Pandora.



COCKTAILS

HENRY

A favorite drink on the Hau Terrace at the Outrigger Canoe Club

1 oz vodka (more to taste)
1 oz orange juice
1 oz lilikoi (passion fruit) juice
1 oz Grenadine syrup
crushed ice

Blend and enjoy in a double old fashioned glass.

SEX ON THE BEACH

Need I say more?

1 oz vodka
1 oz peach schnapps
3 oz cranberry juice
3 oz orange juice

Shake with ice and pour into a martini glass. Serve with a slice of fresh pineapple.

A Night in Hawai'i

MENU

Canadian Bacon & Pineapple Pizza

In order to get to Mokule'ia where my grandparents (and Daisy Wilder) lived you have to pass through "the pineapple fields," which are on lands surrounding Schofield Barracks and Wheeler Army Airfield. They've been there for as long as I can remember and are a sort of mark to let you know when you're almost to the north shore aka country. Lately, Pineapple pizza has become synonymous with Hawaiian Pizza.

Dough (I am a huge fan of homemade pizza, so I've included my easy dough recipe, but to save time you can also buy premade dough or crust)

3 cups bread flour
1 t salt
1 ¼ cups water
3 T olive oil
1 small spoonful of honey
1 packet of rapid rise yeast

Dough Directions: Mix dough in bread maker on dough setting, separate into 3 (or 2 if you want to make large ones) balls when finished. Use a floured rolling pin to roll out dough for 3 medium pizzas or 2 large.

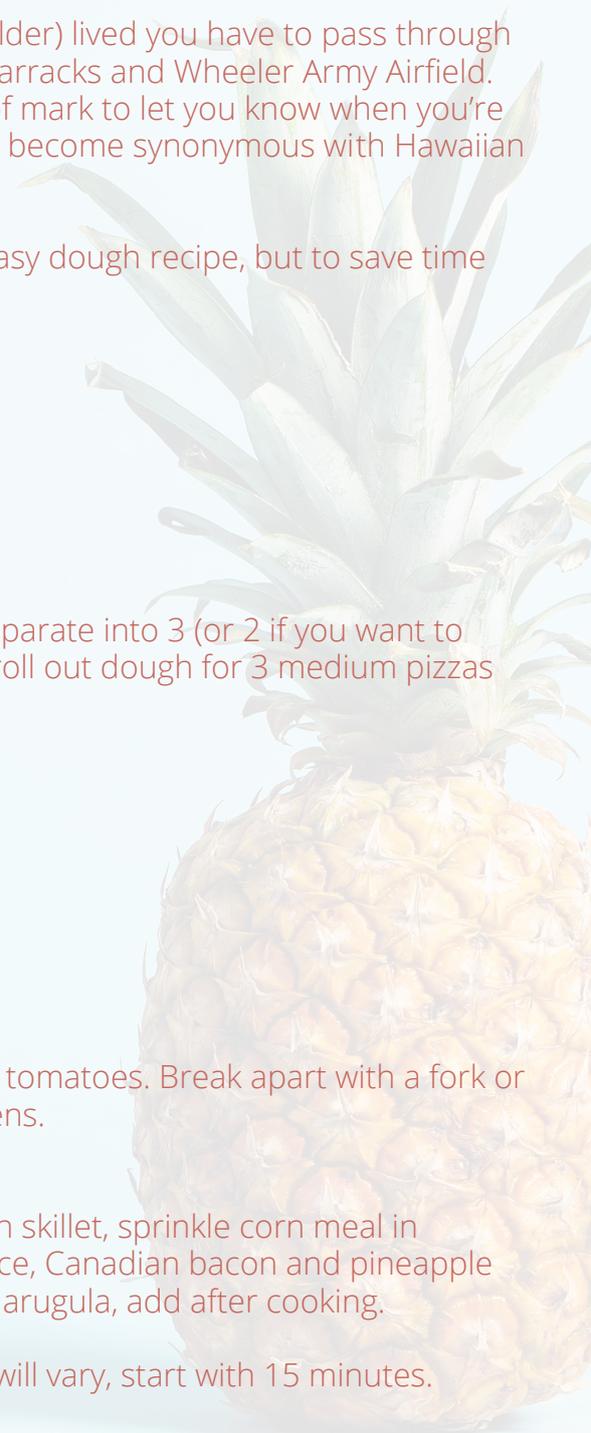
1 can of 30 oz whole peeled tomatoes
1 T red wine
½ t salt
¼ t fennel seed
A couple cloves of garlic
A small bunch of basil
A sprinkle of red pepper flakes

Sauce Directions: saute spices first for a minute or so, then add in tomatoes. Break apart with a fork or knife and add the other ingredients. Simmer until the sauce thickens.

Assembly:

Preheat oven to 450. For thick crust, generously oil a large cast iron skillet, sprinkle corn meal in bottom, spread out crust, then layer on shredded mozzarella, sauce, Canadian bacon and pineapple and sprinkle more cheese. For vegetarians sub the meat for fresh arugula, add after cooking.

For thin crust, I use a pizza stone, or cook on a grill. Cooking time will vary, start with 15 minutes.



Malasadas

Malasadas seem to make it into all of my books, and for good reason – I have yet to meet someone from Hawai'i who does not love malasadas! Their origin is believed to be the Azores, and the Portuguese brought them over to Hawai'i in the 1800s when they came to work the sugarcane. Literally, the name means 'not cooked.' Doughy and sweet and covered in sugar, the malasada is a yeasty donut full of eggs, butter and evaporated milk. Yum.

The best malasadas in the world (in my opinion) can be found at the Punahou Carnival. But since Punahou School guards their recipe closely, I've asked a dear friend and malasada maker for hers. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

1 package yeast
1 teaspoon sugar
1/4 cup warm water

6 cups flour
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup melted butter
1 cup water
1 cup evaporated milk
6 eggs

1 quart canola oil (for cooking)
extra sugar to shake with

Mix yeast, sugar and water and set aside. Beat eggs well. Pour flour into a separate mixing bowl and add salt. Make a well in the flour, pour in yeast mixture, eggs and other ingredients. Beat until the dough is soft, using circular movements. Cover, let rise until double. Flip dough over but do not punch down. Cover and let rise again. Heat oil so it sizzles if water dropped in and plop dough by teaspoon full into oil, cooking until brown. Shake in brown bag with sugar. Best when piping hot.

Note: If the malasadas are turning out with the center still doughy, turn the heat down, allowing them to cook longer.