



Desert Wind

Betty Webb

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When P.I. Lena Jones's Pima Indian partner Jimmy Sisiwan is arrested in the remote northern Arizona town of Walapai Flats, Lena closes the Desert Investigations office and rushes to his aid. What she finds is a town up in arms over a new uranium mine located only ten miles from the magnificent Grand Canyon. Jimmy's sister-in-law, founder of Victims of Uranium Mining, has been murdered, but the opposing side is taken hits, too. Ike Donohue, the mine's public relations flak, is found shot to death, casting suspicion on Jimmy and his entire family. During Lena's investigation, she finds not only a community decimated by dangerous mining practices, but a connection to actor John Wayne and the mysterious deaths resulting from the 1953 filming of "The Conqueror." Gabe Boone, a wrangler on that doomed film, is still alive, but the only person the aged man will confide in is John Wayne's ghost. It's up to Lena to penetrate Gabe's defenses and find out the decades-old tragedy no one in Walapai Flats wants to talk about. By delving into the area's history, Lena learns that old sins never die; they're still taking lives. As with "Desert Wives: Polygamy Can Be Murder," this seventh book in the Lena Jones series exposes real life crimes, and the reason why high-ranking government officials want those crimes to remain under wraps.

Desert Wind Details

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Author : Betty Webb

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From Reader Review Desert Wind for online ebook

Janet Robel says

Suspenseful and horrific in it's subject matter. Scary in a different way that makes you think. Kudos to the author for all the research involved in creating this book, and for a strong female protagonist, Lena Jones, who doesn't back down from her investigation.

Jean says

I recently attended a Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) event and heard Betty Webb discuss her fiction writing on a panel of professionals speaking on how they transitioned from newsroom & news editorial careers into other pursuits. Desert Wind is the first Lena Jones mystery I've read. These appeal to me because I am aware of Betty's extensive investigative journalism expertise. She cites very interesting information and factual events.

Kathy says

The Lena Jones Mystery series by Betty Webb is a first class mystery series and I am thrilled to be able to review the newest addition via Net Galley, Desert Wind, which will be available in February.

Once again Betty Webb brings her rich writing skills to a social issue plaguing the Southwest. This time Betty exposes the nuclear testing and fallout and consequences. While the testing occurred in Nevada the winds brought the nuclear fallout to Northern Arizona and Southern Utah. Cancer and other ailments plague the citizens of this area to this day.

Of course there was also a modern day mystery for our sleuth Lena Jones. And Lena continues to have flashbacks to her mysterious childhood.

I cannot recommend this series highly enough. And I cannot wait until the next Lena Jones adventure. You can pick up a copy of Desert Wind in February or pre-order a copy today.

Arizonagirl says

Lena Jones series, book #7. While the town of Walapai Flats, AZ, may be fictitious, the "downwinders" are a horrible reality. These folks were knowingly and unknowingly exposed to radioactive materials during nuclear testing by the government and uranium mining that has led to numerous health consequences. John Wayne also makes an appearance in the story which is also based on fact. While shooting the film The Conqueror, John Wayne was exposed to radiation, which allegedly killed him.

Christine says

Lena Jones's assistant Jimmy Sisiwan takes time off from Desert Investigations to help his brother Ted Olmstead. Ted is a suspect in the murder of a public relations representative for a controversial uranium mine. When Jimmy gets arrested, Lena travels from Scottsdale to Jimmy's home town of Walapai Flats to help him and his brother.

"Desert Wind" is the latest in Betty Webb's intelligent Lena Jones series. These books are mysteries that are centered around serious issues. This installment tackles uranium mining and the dangers of radiation. The tie-in to Hollywood history and John Wayne is clever and relates to the murder mystery as well as the issue of uranium mining. The book also includes a realistic sub-plot regarding domestic violence that adds to the overall novel.

I really enjoy this series. Lena is a complex character whose current personality was shaped by her tragic childhood. She shares bits and pieces of her background that will catch new readers up without distracting them from the current storyline. While I can't always relate to her actions, I respect her intelligence and her skill as an investigator. Lena isn't afraid to tackle anyone to get the answers she needs to who really murdered Ike Donohue, as well as getting the truth about the issue of uranium mining, which makes for an interesting, action-filled book.

This book started out great, but it did slow down a bit in the middle. While I love watching Lena in action, some of the investigation did seem to drag a bit. I would give this book a 4 ½ stars if possible. While it's an excellent book, I didn't enjoy it as much as "Desert Wives", the previous book in the series. However, this installment is still an excellent, well-written book that gives you something to think about while entertaining you at the same time. I see elements of both Tony Hillerman and Sara Paretsky in Betty Webb's books, but her voice is unique and one whose stories will stick with you long after finishing the book.

I received this book from NetGalley, through the courtesy of Poisoned Pen Press, in exchange for an honest review.

Kate says

Southwest murder mystery, Arizona/Utah setting, strong female PI, for the genre fiction readers, this one has a lot of environmental concerns - uranium mining and greedy developers.

Writergirl says

Like all of the Lena Jones mysteries, this was based on a story that Betty Webb did back in her days as a journalist for the paper, putting private investigator Lena Jones smack in the middle of a coverup that spans over sixty years and puts her partner and his family as prime suspects in a murder. This is a great story with some very scary real life consequences right at the center of events.

Andrew says

“OK, I’m going to write a book set in the present day where the Duke – John Wayne for those too young to remember – is going to be a supporting character.” Betty Webb sets herself a nice little challenge in “Desert Wind”, the 7th book in the Lena Jones series. AND, in my opinion, she actually succeeds.

John Wayne played Genghis Kahn in “The Conqueror”, which was filmed in Northern Arizona. Webb’s contention is that many of the stars, staff, and extras in this movie – including Wayne – died of cancer at a far greater rate than the rest of the population. AND that the presence of fallout from the outdoor nuclear bomb tests conducted by the government in those days played a major hand in those deaths.

How the filming of that movie in the mid 1950s influences more recent actions in the early 2010s is the underlying premise of the book. On the surface, the book is a pleasant murder mystery (if those terms can truly be paired) – a nice easy-to-understand read. Underneath – and not very deeply – Webb warns of the dangers of allowing The Powers That Be to access radioactive materials without adequate protections and safeguards. Further, that the Powers That Be who have a vested interest in the mining of radioactive materials and their subsequent use – whether in war materials, power plants, or whatever – are usually the ones who also set the levels of “adequate safeguards”.

I appreciate Miss Webb’s devotion to story, and to characters – AND to espousing a cause without sacrificing either of those other two important aspects of a good novel. This is the 4th Lena Jones novel I’ve read, and I eagerly await my opportunity to read the remainder.

Aside: I say “read”. In this case, I listened to the Audio CD version of Marguerite Gavin reading Miss Webb’s text. I was already familiar with Miss Gavin’s work from narration of Dana Stabenow’s Kate Shugak series, but with this CD, she shows that she is NOT tied to one author, character, or locale. Miss Gavin demonstrates her ability to take a strong female character and turn her into a living being. (AND, while I have no evidence, I suspect that the “female” limitation is actually NOT one that would tie the hands of Miss Gavin – given a strong male lead, I’m sure she could handle THAT narration with ease, as well.)

After some serious internal debate with myself – 5 stars. Miss Webb tells a good story, AND tells a good story UNDER that story. AND leaves me with emotions and memories long after I’ve finished the actual book (and a subsequent one – I’m a little late with this review). THAT, my friends, IS my definition of 5 star.

Sonya says

Not a book I would normally read. Heavy on environmental issues.

The mystery and unanswered questions held my attention. With several sub-plots and personal issues that were resolved in addition to the main mystery.

I had trouble jumping back and forth between times periods, but she did make it clear when she did.

The woman detective had foul language, perhaps justified ?? by the information she was trying to reach from the characters who would react to those words.

A change of pace from my normal reads. Will wait for quite awhile before I read another, maybe.

Cathy Cole says

First Line: From his vantage point with the horses on a small hillock, Gabe Boone watched the cameras track the actor across the simmering desert floor toward the skin-draped yurt.

Jimmy Sisiwan-- Lena Jones' partner in Desert Investigations-- is her bedrock. Not only does she rely on his talent and expertise at work, she considers him family. Having been shot in the head and left for dead by her mother and then raised in a series of foster homes, Lena doesn't give her trust or love to anyone easily. So when Jimmy is arrested and jailed in the remote northern Arizona town of Walapai Flats, Lena closes down the Scottsdale business and heads north.

When she gets there, she finds a town divided over the issue of plans for a new uranium mine. Some welcome the desperately needed new jobs. Others find two reasons to be worried: (1) The owner of the new mine previously owned another uranium mine on Navajo land that was so mismanaged, it had to be closed down due to polluted water and soaring rates of cancer. (2) The new mine is ten miles from the Grand Canyon, and all water run-off would drain directly into it. This is one issue that has already turned deadly-- and shows no sign of stopping.

Characters and story are everything in *Desert Wind*. As part of her investigation, Lena becomes acquainted with Jimmy's adoptive father, a rancher who lives outside town, and many other Walapai Flats inhabitants. The longtime residents are tough nuts to crack, and Lena soon learns why. Through chapters tucked in between the ones with present-day action, we learn that Walapai Flats is still suffering from a sixty-year-old injustice: the United States' testing of nuclear bombs on its own citizens. For decades, these people have had family members die while they're lied to by strangers who smile and carry credentials.

(The United States conducted atmospheric and underground testing of nuclear bombs in Nevada during the 1950s. Low population density, mile upon mile of flat, government-owned land, and an easterly wind blowing away from the populous west coast were factors that decided in the Nevada site's favor.)

Unfortunately, it was no favor for any living thing caught in the path of those easterly winds, and Betty Webb once again proves how brilliantly she can break our hearts and raise our ire against blatant injustice while she spins a tale of mystery. Whenever someone asks me about books that depict the "real Arizona," I start talking Betty Webb and Lena Jones. Yes, these books deal with human rights issues, but the author never once forgets the mystery or the people who populate it. The characters, the land, the human rights topics-- Webb serves up the whole enchilada for a true reading hunger.

Josine van Heek says

Well written mystery interwoven with the history of nuclear bomb testing, uranium mining and Downwinders in the Southwest (USA).

Betty says

In this Lena Jones adventure, she decided to respect her partners Jimmy requested to stay out the situation where his adopted brother is being held as a material witness in the murder of a man who he had a public disagreement. Lena changed her mind when she receives Information that Jimmy has been arrested for intimidating a witness. She arrives in Walapai Flats, Arizona to find him free on bail. Lena will do the investigation after Jimmy's adopted Father hires DI. Lena finds the locals not selling to talk with outsiders. The town is disturbed by the plans to open a uranium mine nearby. The area is upset as there are many deaths from various cancers. The locals blame the deaths in a uranium mine that is now closed. A peaceful rally turns violent and the Police are late in arrival. Will Lena find answers before she loses her life?

February 7 new edition about Lena Jones life will be released DESERT VENGEANCE. I am looking forward to reading it.

Roger says

A good book and series, found them in the Freading library app.

Tory Wagner says

Desert Wind by Betty Webb is the 7th in the series about private detective Lena Jones. As with the others in the series, it takes place in Arizona and the descriptions a of this area are beautiful. This time the mystery deals with several environmental disasters, an atomic bomb trial and the opening of a uranium mine, that both cause adverse effects in the population.

Donna says

I've liked these books in this particular series. I've read 3 so far. The author does her research on the topics which her stories touch on. I like that it seems thorough and written in a way that is believable and I also feel like I learn something.

She also has great characters that also seem real. I like that there wasn't a romance in this one. Sometimes they feel like an after-thought. Lena, the MC, went to Utah to find her partner, Jimmy, to help him out with a family problem. I liked that more was learned about him.
