

Lawrence Book Shouts 'Read Me!'

No One Gardens Alone A Life of Elizabeth Lawrence

By Emily Herring Wilson
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BY ANITA STONE

Special to The Pilot

While most bookstores stock shelves of popular gardening books, there is always one that slips through the shelves and cries out, "read me!" Such is the first biography of Elizabeth Lawrence, researched and written by one of the great writers of our time.

When I met Emily Herring Wilson at a recent book signing, I immediately knew she would capture my curiosity not only as a gardener, but as a biographer and reader. And, although Wilson said, "writing the most difficult phase in the book is the chronology — trying to establish what happened and the dates," she spoke as if she just had lunch with Lawrence.

Wilson offers a biography chock full of information, an orderly life of a soulful gardener that any reader and gardener can identify.

This book reads like the gar-

dener's horticultural haven, a lifetime devoted to plants, plants, and plants.

"Elizabeth could have been a fine fiction writer," says Wilson. "She was feisty and sharp."

Herring takes you on a journey that spans eight decades of a traditional southerner, a garden writer, a landscape architect, and a poet. It was recently that the mystique of her life appeared through a series of letters that tell the story of a very private lady.

"I wanted to tell the story true to her, on her terms," says Wilson.

Lawrence made it known that she wanted to find a place in her life that was a refuge. Wilson maintains Elizabeth could come through the garden and find a world of her own, her secret place.

"When you write a biography," says Wilson, "you second guess it. There are lots of whys."

"When I began to write this biography, I was always afraid gardeners would only speak in Latin."

Much to her surprise, Wilson discovered that gardeners did

speaking in English terminology.

Lawrence wrote about herself. "I want to be surrounded by loving friends, and still be left all to myself."

Shy, yet feisty, she needed her inner space and a peaceful environment which she found in the garden.

"Elizabeth wasn't a people snob, but a plant snob," Wilson says.

A major player in Lawrence's life was Rosa Hicks who lives in Linville.

"I wish Elizabeth would have lived next door to me," she says. "We would have been best friends."

This book is a must-read. It is clever, emotional and to the point. It is written in story form and grabs the heart and soul of the gardener. Through years of research, Wilson has beautifully portrayed one of the iconic gardeners of our time.

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