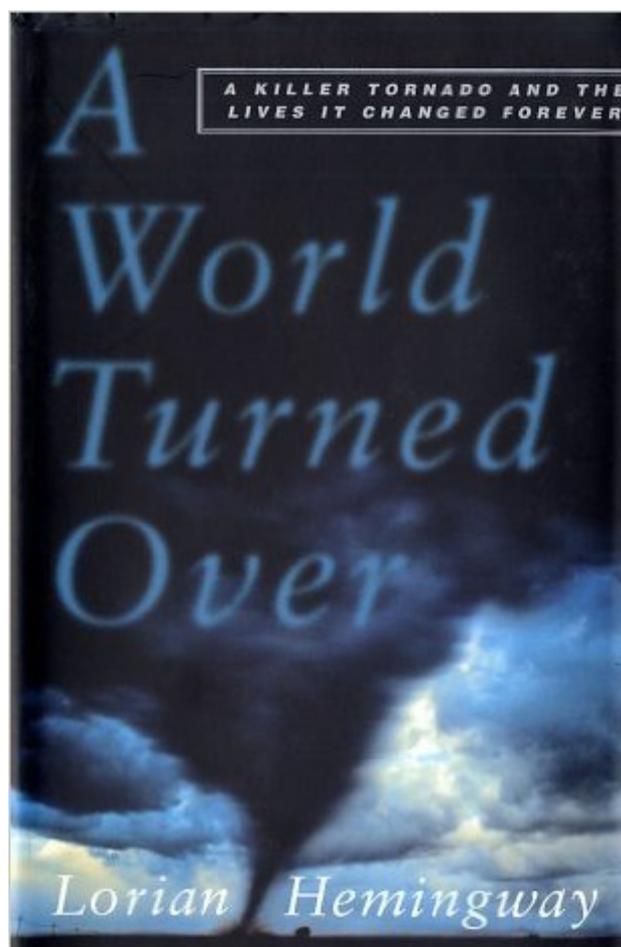


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# A World Turned Over : A Killer Tornado And The Lives It Changed Forever



## Synopsis

"In the dream I see the yellowing Mississippi sky...I feel the edges of the wind, quick and rough and nearer than I ever believed it could be, cutting an undertow in the now unbreathable air, It is close now, stealing by degrees across the pasture that spreads like a dark, lake behind the store, its black belly bulging straight out as it begins to feed on scrub pine, then on the girded steel of the supermarket, on the cars once parked in even rows, on living tissue pliant as clay. If there is time, then there is nothing to do but run." At 4:33 P.M. on March 3, 1966, an F-5 tornado, the deadliest category, struck central Mississippi, killing fifty-seven people. Fourteen of those victims died in South Jackson, thirteen of them in a newly built shopping mall, the Candlestick Shopping Center. In minutes, what had been a row of nearly maintained shops was transformed into a scene of unimaginable devastation. Lives were changed forever. "A World Turned Over" recounts what happened on the day of the Candlestick Tornado, as it came to be known in Jackson, and how its aftermath still reverberates today. Returning to the neighborhood where she grew up, Lorian Hemingway remembers the Jackson that she knew: a Southern town defined as much by its warm creeks and catfish ponds and the smell of clay in the air as by its inhabitants -- families with a deep sense of place and of community. When the tornado struck, it destroyed more than buildings and it reached beyond the deaths it caused. For those people who, like Hemingway, grew up there, Jackson changed in an instant from a safe and familiar place into an alien landscape of death and destruction. Hemingway vividly re-creates the day of the tornado, drawing on both news stories and interviews with survivors. She tells us about Donna Durr, who with her baby was lifted in her car seventy-five feet up into the vortex; Juland Jones, who worked at the local hot dog shop and was the only African-American to die at Candlestick; eighteen-year-old Ronny Hannis, who survived to help rescue others, oblivious to his own life-threatening wounds inflicted by broken flying glass and debris. Returning to the scene more than thirty years later, Hemingway finds many of the survivors and their families still in Jackson, their memories now as much a part of the landscape as the creeks and fields. "A place does not love you," she writes, "only people do, but a place gives up what it is made of in an elemental rush, so that once you breathe it in, the chemistry in you changes." As lyrical as it is haunting, "A World Turned Over" is an unforgettable story of awesome destruction and the extraordinary resilience of ordinary people, a moving exploration of faith and hope in the face of tragedy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I would like to make two comments about this book. Most important, it is powerful, beautiful, and interesting, and is a great example of literary reporting, as well as memoir. My second comment is to express my anger at the amazingly ill-informed and inaccurate comments made by "a reader from Arlington, Virginia," who saw fit to give the lowest rating possible to a book that, by all appearances, he or she has not even read. The comment that it is "poorly researched" could not be further from the truth, and his condescending suggestion that the author should have made use of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History makes him look like a fool, since that institution was cited as a source of information, as was the Eudora Welty Library. The reviewer is right that the town of "Byram" is not spelled correctly, though his argument is rather deflated in light of the fact that he cannot correctly spell the word "rectified" himself. There are many Jackson natives that would take issue with his assertion that there is not a single live oak tree in Jackson. One of the most amazingly ignorant "criticisms" is that "there were very few eyewitness interviews in the book"-----There were more than twenty. Even more outrageous is the claim that there is "very little on the impact the event had upon the community of South Jackson." (sic) In reality, this impact is the subject of the ENTIRE BOOK. It's unfortunate that this person's careless reading was translated into a review. Listen instead to The New York Times, which praised *A World Turned Over* and called it "lush" and "evocative."

First of all, I am shocked and disappointed to see the error-ridden and ill-thought review of this book from Mr. Rubendall. I wonder if it is even possible that he read the book, and if he did, how he did

not "get it." Actually he is right on one count, which is that if you are hoping to read the cliché-filled, formulaic, "straightforward" examples of "disaster books" with which he is so enamored, this book is not for you. If, however, you are interested in a book that powerfully, lyrically, and with great compassion describes a tragedy that has been ongoing in the minds and lives of a group of small-town Americans for more than thirty years, *A World Turned Over* will not disappoint. It is in the same league as John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. Highly recommended.

I confess to considerable foreboding prior to reading this, fearing it would be over two hundred pages of reminiscing and social commentary on the deep south. I wanted to learn about the Mississippi tornado disaster, not read a piece on Southern culture. "*A World Turned Over*" looked to be aiming to disappoint. Instead, I was taken into the world of the Candlestick Tornado. Now this isn't a compilation of facts and figures, and don't get me wrong, the reminiscing and commentary are there to be sure. But this is no book about Southern life with occasional references to a killer twister—it is about the storm itself, and how it disrupted the lives and peace of a community forever. I have never been to Mississippi, but after reading this I feel an honorary member of Jackson and Candlestick. Unlike some others, I do feel this is very much a disaster book, albeit an unusual one. It is told through the memories of survivors of that awful day. Some describe the twister itself and what they saw. Others tell of loss. Perhaps the most interesting is with the family who lost a son. It is these interviews that truly make for a disaster book, for the damage and debris can all be cleaned up; the tornado is gone. Memories live on. Memories of a world turned over.

The least discussed facet of grieving in our culture--that you don't get over it, that it doesn't go away, that you carry it to your grave, that those we have lost actually are still with us, is illuminated in this book with shining humanity, truth-drenched prose and rich description. Lorian Hemingway has dug way way way below the surface to pull out deep truths about people, tragedy, loss, renewal and survival and managed to avoid the triumphant ending other authors seem never to have been able to resist. A gripping read which will haunt you long after you've finished it.

Very good book on the Candlestick Park tornado. I lived in Jackson, MS at that time and my sixth grade teacher lived in that area. I still remember it like it was yesterday. Lorian Hemingway brought all that happened that day to life.

what a great book!!it can honestly fall under the heading of a nature, factual, small town/people and

a suspenseful book. i loved the way this book built up from a small town story to the actual tornado part. you got to know some of the real life people and then the disaster hits. the accounts and lines used to describe the sounds of the tornado were great- "sounded like many freight trains" and "like a heartbeat". i learned a lot from this book, but i also "saw" the story unfold in my head like an old black and white movie. (i think i saw it in black and white because of those great "wizard of oz" references) the writing here and the words used were really what made this a great read. when i first glanced at this book i knew quickly it was something i would buy. what i didn't realize until i got home was the famous last name. at that point i separated the two. this Hemingway stands on her own! i will go back and get her earlier works. something though, makes me want to go take another peak at "old man and the sea".

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