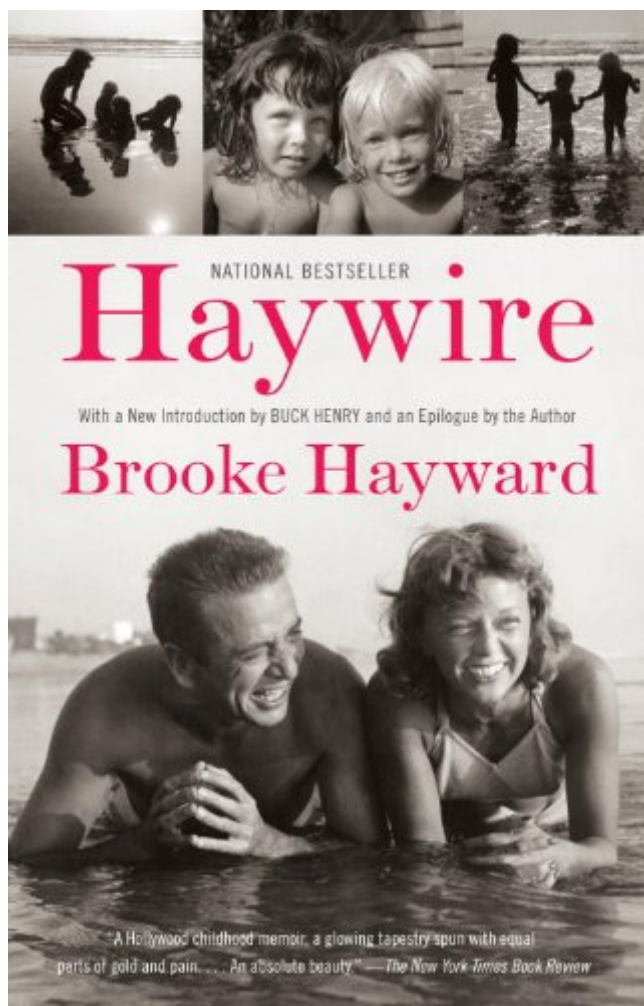


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Haywire



Synopsis

From the moment of its publication in 1977, *Haywire* was a national sensation and a #1 bestseller, a celebrated Hollywood memoir of a glittering family and the stunning darkness that lurked just beneath the surface. Brooke Hayward was born into the most enviable of circumstances. The daughter of a famous actress and a successful Hollywood agent, she was beautiful, wealthy, and living at the very center of the most privileged life America had to offer. Yet at twenty-three her family was ripped apart. Who could have imagined that this magical life could shatter, so conclusively, so destructively? Brooke Hayward tells the riveting story of how her family went haywire. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Dark and Murkey Margaret Sullivan was such an irresistible and enigmatic figure, this should have been a very compelling read. I have to say, for all the glamour and privilege that life and lineage heaped on Ms. Hayward, it did not translate into a happy life. She has a very attractive and

engaging writing style; the memories she recounts of a rarified and fairytale upbringing in a family of theatrical royalty are steeped in mood and pathos. However, there is little clarity, or understanding offered of who these folks really were, or why so much tragedy saturated this family circle. There is little questioning or examination of the reasons for the frequent suicides among her family members, no explanation for the deep alienation and sadness that penetrated their familial connections and hung over them like a dark cloud. There is also an emotional emptiness in her accounts of so much of her family life--like she is recounting a dream she had--and a disturbing romanticizing of this massively dysfunctional family. One wonders why she wrote this book since, not only does it not answer any questions that begged to be answered, it doesn't even ask any.

This is one of the most affecting and memorable memoirs I've ever read, so much so that I've come back to re read it a few times over the years, this last time in Kindle form. There have been plenty of fascinating characters in high places worthy of reading about, but few biographies or memoirs about them are THIS well done. Truly "suis generis" in my opinion. Brooke Hayward is a great writer. She depicts her tragic sister Bridget, particularly with a poetic power. The scene of her coming to the door of her apartment on the brink of something terrible happening to her had my heart in my throat, even though I'd read the book in the past and knew the ultimate outcome! That is a true sign of great writing. So many of the characters written about here have their own fascinating story lines to explore, so once you finish this book you may want to read more about them. It's always good to read several sources about an individual, to get a well rounded perspective. Some worth reading about that appear in this book, just to name a few: Pamela Churchill, Slim Hawkins, any of the Fondas, the Duchins, the Harrimans. The lives described here intersected with so many others of note, and at a very unique time in American history, the 30s to the 60s. I was always left wondering about the mother, the actress Margaret Sullavan. I had read elsewhere or got between the lines in this book, that she had at least a version of bipolar disorder (manic depression), which would explain her getting a 'bee in her bonnet' about one idea or another, and changing their lives entirely. Also explained her eventual suicide and the mental illness which appeared later in her children. Brooke herself is such an interesting and layered person, and obviously deeply intelligent if she could produce a work of this quality. I would love to read more from her.

When "Haywire" was originally published in February 1977, I had snapped up a copy the first week it was published. Immediately it cast its spell; I plunged into it totally engrossed, and in one afternoon and evening I had read it through to the last sentence. The final words are so poignant yet

brave, Brooke Hayward's declaration to survive as she leaves her father's deathbed that I quote them here: "So I started for the doorway and the dark corridor beyond, knowing, as I passed through it, that my only choice was to keep moving forward." Finished I was spent and awash in a variety of emotions; chiefly admiration for both Ms. Hayward's superb writing style and also her courage in confronting her family's checkered, sometimes tragic past. There was empathy for Ms. Hayward and brother Bill for having to experience the same, plus sadness for the lost, beguiling Hayward family who had been blessed by every joy in life until things began to go awry with horrific results. Finally since I was a callow twenty two year old, I fell a little bit in love with Ms. Hayward's mercurial younger sister Bridget who seemed a hapless victim of fate, and as viewed in her photo was exquisite, an angelic, radiant blonde out of a painting by Botticelli. Gratifyingly "Haywire" was both a critical and popular success with deservedly laudatory reviews and was on the New York Times Bestseller list for several months. I reread it immediately since I had initially gobbled it down to pick up any nuance or detail I might have missed and loved it just as much. Anyone I knew got a rave review from me plus I gave copies as gifts to a favorite cousin and a lovely girl I was wooing at the time; it was a hit with both. In print and television interviews, Ms. Hayward spoke of her next book which was to be a sequel of sorts, concerning her two marriages and the years left out of "Haywire", although I impatiently awaited it's publication and any other books by Ms. Hayward they never materialized to my extreme disappointment. In 1980 "Haywire" became a television miniseries, but except for an affecting performance by Lee Remick as Margaret Sullavan, Ms. Hayward's mother, it was inferior to the original. The Haywards were a celebrity family in the Golden Age of both Hollywood and Broadway in the 1930's and 1940's. Ms. Hayward's mother was the luminous, resonant voiced actress Margaret Sullavan, star of such films as "Three Comrades" and "The Shop Around the Corner" and on Broadway in "The Voice of the Turtle" and "The Deep Blue Sea". Her father the courtly, debonair Leland Hayward was first a powerhouse agent whose clients included Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, Gregory Peck and Greta Garbo, then an acclaimed Broadway producer who presented the original productions of "South Pacific", "Gypsy" and "The Sound of Music" among others. They were happily married for about ten years and had three children in even succession, Brooke, Bridget and Bill, living for a while a halcyon, privileged existence on both coasts. When the parents divorced, the seeds of destruction were sown that ultimately by the end of 1960 left the family irrevocably shattered. Margaret Sullavan, Bridget and Bill all suffered mental breakdowns, and spent time in psychiatric hospitals. More devastating was Margaret Sullavan's shockingly unexpected death New Year's Day 1960 followed by Bridget's, a scant ten months later. Both were caused by overdoses of prescription drugs, and it was unclear as to whether or not they

were accidental or deliberate. Leland at this point in time was on his fifth marriage, and Brooke herself a divorcee with two little boys at the ripe old age of twenty-three. Quite the family saga, but "Haywire" is not just a grim, depressing, downward trajectory of unrelenting doom. Remember the Haywards had ten relatively tranquil years together as a family, and the happiness, love and laughter they once shared are presented by Ms. Hayward interludes of sunlight that balance the shadows. Additionally, she skillfully conjures up in the background of their existence the genuine glamour of Hollywood and Broadway at their peak with a starry supporting cast that adds an extra fascination for the reader. Now, just last month, "Haywire" was reissued in a Vintage Paperback with an introduction by screenwriter Buck Henry and an epilogue by Brooke Hayward. I happened on it by accident on , and ordered a copy since I was very curious to read the epilogue. In recent years, I had read in the papers of further tragic events that had stalked Ms. Hayward, and perhaps she would reveal as well why she never wrote the sequel to "Haywire". She does, and the reason makes perfect sense. Both the introduction and the epilogue are very slim, written in pared down prose, less than two pages each, the bare minimum that can be revealed is just what's offered. I don't fault either Ms. Hayward or Mr. Henry, especially Ms. Hayward whom I commend even more for her strength of character to survive and function after going through such an emotional minefield. However I did decide to reread "Haywire" all these years later to see how it stood the test of time and find if my opinion had changed. It had, I was no longer quite so enthralled and my viewpoints of the characters and events had evolved in some instances, I had certainly gotten over that slight boyish crush on Bridget Hayward! Part of this was due to my familiarity with the material after multiple readings in the past. Also, I'm in my fifties now, and have gone through life's passages, love, marriage, fatherhood, family losses, joys and tribulations, it's only natural my perceptions have altered in the thirty four years since I first read it. What remains timeless is the lucid beauty and grace of Ms. Hayward's style, and her skillful character delineation. She is a born storyteller, with the soul of an artist, able to illuminate a passage by choosing the right blend of words to achieve a glowing literary tapestry. This is reminiscent of the way a gifted painter or composer would select the perfect color or musical note to create a work of art. Ms. Hayward generously credits assistance from two close talented writers friends; the first Johanna Mankiewicz Davis, who aided with the first part of the book before she was killed by a taxi in 1974, then Buck Henry, for the final polishing her editor and publisher the gifted Bob Gottlieb. Both Margaret Sullavan and Leland Hayward were charismatic, larger than life individuals, and as many reviewers pointed out could have been characters from the pen of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Even though they along with their daughter Bridget had been dead from three to fourteen years when Ms. Hayward began

writing, they spring vividly to life resurrected and fully developed, complex people filtered through her memories. To augment and perhaps give a different perspective to her family Ms. Hayward includes brief recollections by family friends, such as Henry and Jane Fonda, Jimmy Stewart, her former stepmother Nancy Keith, director Josh Logan, playwright Paul Osborn, writer Tom Mankiewicz, and Bridget's boyfriend Bill Francisco. This works marvelously well as a literary device and adds to the richness of the narrative. This reissue has new cover art black and white photographs of the Haywards taken during an idyllic summer beach holiday circa 1942. Maggie and Leland are tanned, gorgeous, and merrily laughing, and there is a charming trio of photos of the children playing on the seashore. These are heartrending to see, after you find out what the future holds for this blithe, sparkling family. Although "Haywire" is a Hollywood childhood memoir, unlike later books by the children of Joan Crawford, Bette Davis and Bing Crosby it isn't a self pitying exercise in revenge, laced with vitriol with an eye to make a buck. Rather Ms. Hayward eloquently with equal measures of love and sorrow recounts a cautionary tale of the calamitous effects of emotional carelessness and flawed communication on a family that should have on the surface lived happily ever after. As such, it's a towering achievement, kudos to Ms. Hayward, one that is profoundly moving and hopefully gives everyone that reads it a fresh appreciation and perspective of their own family. Don't want to pass this one by; this is a personal history you shouldn't miss!

This book started out very well, meticulously detailing movie star life in mid century America. But it died off about one third of the way through and became just sort of a listing of major events that occurred , an outline with no subtitles. The two most interesting characters, Margaret Sullavan and her daughter Brigid left the most questions unanswered, despite a major "lead up". The father, Leland, seemed to be loving but pretentious and narcissistic, and got much more attention in this book than I cared to read.

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