



Spider Web

Earlene Fowler

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Benni Harper is back in an unforgettable new mystery from national bestselling author Earlene Fowler.

The Memory Festival is a celebration of recollections and loved ones through crafts. But when a local cop is wounded by a mysterious sharpshooter who seems to have a vendetta against the police, Benni fears for *her* loved ones, especially her police chief husband. Benni is determined to make her hometown safe-before their peaceful street fair becomes a day to remember in the worst way.

Spider Web Details

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From Reader Review Spider Web for online ebook

Becky says

I love this series!

Candace says

Was disappointed with this one. I felt like the author was grasping to fill the pages. So much description of things that did not have anything to do with the plot, or plots. Too much going on in this one. Gabe and his nightmares, the sniper, Bennie's hangups with Gabes past and the women he had in the past. She is starting to look like a pathetic jealous nutcase! I've always enjoyed this series, but this may have done it for me.

Judy Iliff says

Earlene Fowler never ceases to entertain with her Benni Harper series, and *Spider Web* is no exception.

Benni is planning the first-ever Memory Festival, an event to honor memories through oral history, scrapbooks, photography, quilting, and crafts. Benni has a list 10 pages long of things that must be done in preparation for the festival. When a sniper starts shooting at policemen, her priorities change. If not change, they are at least prioritized differently. With a sniper present, Gabe begins to experience PTSD from Vietnam. To add to the stress, a woman shows up in town asking questions of and about Benni. Benni has been through this before when an old love of Gabe's came back into his life. Bennie needs to help figure out all these mysteries so everyone can get back to every day life.

I seldom read books that have anything to do with the war in Vietnam. It still, after all these years, is a bit too recent for comfort. In this book, however, the whole conflict is handled with care without over dramatizing or over trivializing it. I have enjoyed all of the Fowler books. One thing I really appreciate is Benni seems to have moved away from the "I'll do what I want and you can't tell me what to do" attitude which is refreshing.

Susan says

Do you ever wonder why a particular author or series becomes wildly popular while other authors, apparently just as good, don't make that leap? I have nothing against Fowler's Benni Harper mysteries, but I don't know why they are best sellers. There are several military nurses in this book, which makes me wonder why the marvelous mysteries about nurses by Sharon Wildwing are not read more. At any rate, Benni is organizing a Memory festival when the town of San Celina is disrupted by a sniper who's targeting police officers. There's also a mysterious woman who is stalking Benni, who is afraid that she's another of husband Gabe's exes. There are quilters, wise elders, supportive friends, loyal horses and a loving dog.

Glenna says

I enjoyed this newest Benni Harper mystery (this is one of my favorite series). This book touches on the importance of the veterans around us and the problems that many veterans from vietnam have. They also found the bad guy in the end!!

Doreen Fritz says

This is the latest in a series of mysteries "starring" Benni Harper -- err, Ortiz. A young widow now married to the Hispanic police chief Gabe Ortiz, Benni somehow manages to get involved in all sorts of mysteries and murders. This series takes place in a town on the central coast of California -- there are ranches, wineries, galleries, historical societies, churches, festivals -- and these are settings in which Benni is very much involved. Her grandma Dove and her dad raised her on a ranch. She is a curator at a folk art museum. Her best friend is the owner of a book store in town. Her cousin runs the local newspaper. Benni is currently planning a Memories festival, setting up booths and activities. Her husband is preoccupied with the fact that a sniper has been taking potshots at police officers. And there is a strange woman in town asking probing questions about Benni and Gabe, whether they like children, what they do in their spare time, what their family is like, etc. So who IS this woman? Another one of the women Gabe "knew" before he settled down with Benni?

The mystery is engaging enough. This is not Fowler's strongest entry in the series. There are several "timing" discrepancies. And though she starts by having Benni tell everyone how BUSY she is, and how things will get easier next week after the festival, she still somehow ends up giving Benni two or three "free" afternoons when she has "nothing to do." A good editor would have caught that. And at the ending, when she is catching us up on what has happened since the climactic scene, she talks about Gabe seeing a psychiatrist for "several weeks" before resuming the current action -- and it has only been 11 days since the climactic scene. Hmm. But it's a good enough story. What I like about this series is the "everydayness" of it. She DOES seem extremely focused on what everybody eats. But she realistically portrays how people fill their time with conversations, errands, internal thoughts, etc. I really like Benni. And that makes me wonder what Earlene Fowler is like. I think I would like to be her friend.

Jo-Ann Murphy says

A very enjoyable quick read. The characters are well developed and the story moves along quickly.

At times, I found the main character to become very annoying with her paranoia but the story was engaging enough to overcome it. The basic mystery was rather simplistic and could have been wrapped up with a better motive but the secondary story was more interesting with a nice twist.

I liked the memory festival and the basic questions about what home means along with the story structure.

jimtown says

This is one of the best in the Benni Harper mystery series. I've read every one of the series and almost all of Fowler's books. I'm missing only Love, Mercy, which I hope to read soon and her quilt book.

Each of the books in the Benni Harper series is named after a quilt block which is probably what attracted me to them. After fifteen books, the characters feel like old friends I visit each time I read. This time Benni was chairperson of the Memory Festival. This first time event proved to be a very popular idea. I wouldn't be surprised to see them spring up across the country soon.

Benni's had the festival under control, but her husband, Chief of Police Gabriel Ortiz, was working overtime trying to catch a sniper who was shooting at cops. This seemed to flare up Gabe's PTSD. This is the first time Fowler and Benni have dealt with this subject and they both did an excellent job.

Benni knew the subject was a delicate one, the chief of police needed to keep a squeaky clean reputation and even though she wanted him to go for help, she dared not say too much about it. Like her gramma Dove always told her, when the time was right, she'd know. Other things were on Benni's mind. She was very suspicious about Lin Snyder who came out of nowhere and seemed to know more about Gabe than a stranger should. Lin also seemed overly curious about Benni. Amid the festival activities, Benni finds time to break into Lin's motel room and search it and she walks face to face into the sniper.

There was an excellent, graphic description of what happened in Vietnam from a nurse's perspective. It's time people heard the truth. Benni thought so too.

Lbaker says

This is my favourite of this series.

Many of the characters that I have previously enjoyed, have continued to be important parts of the story. When I am older I sincerely wish to be Dove and practice Cane Fu.

Each book in this series seems to focus on one issue, earlier State Fair focused on racism. This book focuses on War nurses.

There was a two page dialogue of a Vietnam nurse to some rude teenagers that I read aloud to my husband - he was as moved as I was by it.

There was also a nurse from the second WW, who's story reminds one that heroes come in all shapes and sizes, and one should remember that the old woman you may be ignoring in line or on the bus, may be a hero just for surviving to a ripe age, and might have been a true superhero at some point of her life.

I truly can hardly wait for the next book in this series.

Melodie says

I was a bit disappointed with STATE FAIR, the previous Benni Harper book, but this one was truly a 5-star read. I read about things I didn't know about before, like the Bataan Angels, and this story just had me from the beginning. Some of Benni's observations in the first chapter were wonderful. Like when she talked about Jack her first husband and how when she thought about him years later how it wasn't so overwhelming, it was like a soft pinch to her heart. To me that was such a beautiful, lyrical statement. There were lots of things like that in this book. And a passage at the Memory Festival where a nurse who served in Vietnam is telling some smart-ass college girls what it was like had me in tears and actually sparked a conversation with my husband about that time and the things I saw when I was a ward clerk at a VA Hospital from 1972 to 1974. Thanks, Earlene, for an excellent read! Last night was the season finale for my favorite show, The Vampire Diaries, and I almost forgot it because I was so involved in this book!

Virginia Hill says

I'm having mixed emotions regarding this fifteenth Benni Harper Mystery. I very much enjoyed it and feel it may be tied with Mariner's Compass as my favorite of the series. So, that explains my delight. Now, here is the reason for my angst. I fear this may be the final book in the series. Earlene Fowler did a Facebook Status update on August 4, where she stated she might not be publishing for awhile (after The Road to Cardinal Valley is released in December). That along with Spider Web's comprehensive epilogue leads me to believe I've just closed the book on a seventeen year long friendship. If this is indeed the end I must say it was beautifully finished.

There were two distinct mysteries - one to do with a sniper and the other to do with a new woman in town. Benni was in the thick of things, and curious, as usual. I particularly enjoyed the preparations and interviews for a book that Benni is helping Isaac with, and for the theme of the Memory Festival. Benni is all about history: recording and preserving it and respecting traditions. As usual, she was busy with her job, friends, family, and involved in a mystery. Gabe was having violent stress induced nightmares (triggered by the sniper attacks) that led him to protect Benni by sleeping apart from her. They dealt with it the best they could, and ultimately Gabe sought the help of a psychiatrist Benni had recently met. Although that female stranger had a connection to someone important to Benni it was not in the way she had imagined. There were significant changes ahead for Benni and her family at the close of this story, but nothing would ever change the true nature of these colorful and respectable characters. How I've enjoyed my time with them!

Jeannie and Louis Rigod says

I enjoyed "Spider Web" on so many levels that I'm sure to miss listing some of them here. I suggest you get your own copy and read it when you have time for really studying the storyline. I kept stopping and was overwhelmed with my own personal memories.

This book deals with Benni being the Chair of the 'Memory Festival' which is about all memories, life, home, death, youth, military etc. In the midst of this, her husband is faced with a sniper that is shooting patrol Officers on his police force.

Gabe, The chief of police finds the situation triggering his potent memories of being in-country in Vietnam.

They are violent. While Benni tries to deal with Gabe's situation, she learns a member of her quilt group was a nurse during the Second World War and was a prisoner for 3 years.

What is the motive behind the snipping? Is it a former military member or a discontent? The city of San Celina is trying to continue their lives while dealing with this very real fear.

I found this book very fulfilling and as I stated, I took my time due to remembering my friends that I made during my time in the USMC, although I was fortunate to be stateside.

This is a book I shall re-read in the years to come. It was an important book to me.

Lain says

I adore Earlene Fowler's books, and have a soft spot for Benni Harper Ortiz. I've eagerly awaited and consumed each and every entry in the series.

Never before have I been disappointed in the writer, the series, or Benni herself... until Spider Web.

The writing is as flawless as ever, and all our favorite characters are there, from Dove to Elvia to Hud. BUT... what is missing is a real mystery. The whodunnit in this book is a mere side note, and what takes center stage is Benni's personal angst. Who is this stranger who seems to know more about Benni and her husband than she should? Is she a past love of Gabe? If so, why is she here?

What bothers me the most, though, is why Benni automatically assumes that this woman is up to no good. And instead of just asking her directly, or going right to Gabe, she BREAKS INTO THIS WOMAN'S HOTEL ROOM and hires a private investigator (at cousin Emory's expense) to figure out what's going on. She's definitely flipped a cork, and taken Hud and Emory with her. Not at all what I would expect from someone who claims to care so much about right and wrong.

If these guys were real friends they'd tell her to knock it off and just ask Gabe what was up, instead of jumping into Benni's delusions with her.

What saves this book from being a two-star is the seamless writing and Earlene Fowler's obvious love for her characters and the central coast of California. I hope she reins Benni in before the next book in the series.

Avid Series Reader says

Spider Web is the 15th book of the Benni Harper mystery series by Earlene Fowler, set in fictitious San Celina on California's Central Coast. The series is set in the 1980s, each mystery lasting about a week, with only a few months elapsed time between the books. The author "freezes time" in order to keep key characters in the series, such as Benni's Gramma Dove and her sister Garnet.

Benni Harper is a lifelong resident of San Celina, born into the ranching community, working as curator for

the Sinclair Folk Art Museum. Her husband Gabriel Ortiz is the Police Chief. Benni knows most of San Celina's residents, and volunteers her time for a variety of civic events. In *Spider Web*, Benni is overseeing the Memory Festival, a celebration encouraging all to record their memories for posterity.

Benni learns a quilter friend at the retirement home is one of the "Angels of Bataan", US Army and Navy nurses who were stationed in the Philipines in WWII and survived 3 years as prisoners of war.

A stranger comes to town and seeks out Benni, and seems to know more about Benni and Gabe than she's been told. Benni becomes uneasy that the woman might be significant to Gabe's past, and intend to restart a past affair with him (as in a previous book in the series).

A sniper shoots a police officer, and the entire town is alarmed. The city decides to continue with the Memory Festival, and Benni is busy on photo interviews with her Gramma Dove's photographer husband. As time permits, Benni tries to find out more about the newcomer. She also meets the newest detective and her photographer husband.

The second officer shot is a close friend, and Benni divides her time between his family and her other duties. Benni finally solves the sniper mystery by accident - her Gramma Dove's and Aunt Garnet's quick wit and bravery save them.

The mystery of the strange woman in town is resolved in an upbeat heartwarming conclusion.

The entire series is primarily about love, loyalty, friendship and family, with mysteries solved along the way. For maximum enjoyment I recommend starting with the first book, *Fool's Puzzle*, as characters grow and relationships evolve with the series.

Cathy Cole says

I've been a fan of this series since its inception, and in many ways I think this fifteenth book is the strongest of them all-- which is saying a lot. There's quite a bit going on in the book: that sniper shooting at police officers, a mysterious woman following Benni around, the Memory Festival, working on photographer Isaac Lyons' latest book, and-- the coup de grâce-- Benni's husband Gabe showing signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. But none of the plot threads are rushed, and all of them blend seamlessly into a story that's hard to put down.

There's some serious stuff going on in *Spider Web*, but Earlene Fowler knows how to add just the right touches of comic relief; most notably the octogenarian ladies of the Coffin Star Quilt Guild, and sisters Dove (Benni's grandmother) and Garnet (Benni's aunt). Dove and Garnet are the type of sisters who love to fuss and squabble with each other, but you can feel the love between them. These ladies have been studying something called cane fu, and all I can say is... if you see an older person with a cane who mentions taking lessons in this discipline, I wouldn't do anything untoward unless I were out of cane's reach. Just sayin'.

Fowler has proven time and again that she can hold her readers in the palm of her hand. She's created a superb cast of characters whom I care for deeply. When one of them is in danger, my heart is in my throat. I've also laughed myself silly, and shed tears of joy and of sorrow. Her series is imbued with a deep and abiding faith. For those of you unfamiliar with these books and who don't care to read anything remotely religious-- don't worry. This is faith done the way it should be. None of these people thump their chests and

proclaim what good Christians they are. These folks see what needs to be done, and they quietly roll up their sleeves and get it done. No strings. No homilies. Just a simple matter of doing the right thing. Reading books like Spider Web can make you feel as though there is some good in the world after all.

Fowler is on a self-professed writing sabbatical, and for all intents and purposes it looks as though this is the end of a wonderful series. It's one that I've grown with over the years. From the beginning when I didn't like Benni's husband or grandmother and doubted I'd continue reading, all the way to now when I'm so glad that I read each and every one. Earlene Fowler's characters grow and change as the years pass. Just as real people do. Just as I have.

And isn't that a marvelous thing to say about a series of books?
