



# The Last Witness from a Dirt Road

*Bill R. Hunt*

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## **The Last Witness from a Dirt Road** Bill R. Hunt

Two coming-of-age boys, best friends, one White and the other Black, live extraordinary lives on a Louisiana sugarcane plantation in 1946 .... Twelve-year-old Billy tells a subtly funny, emotive and poignant story about his young life as he becomes aware of the social and economic forms of segregation and oppression in the early years following World War II. He finds himself accepted by both sides of a clearly delineated social and racial divide in the small community in Louisiana, at school and church, and on the plantation where his father is overseer. Billy speaks from his conscience, about family and friendships, about a time in Southern history long before the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s became a reality. When a rare snow storm blankets the area on Thanksgiving Day, he is stunned as he recognizes the great disparity in his life in the Plantation "Big House" to the deprivation in the lives of his friends in the Plantation Quarters. From that time of stark awareness of the inequities around him, the dirt road and the plantation symbolize the meanness of a way of life essentially unchanged for over two hundred years. His long friendship with his Black friend, Papa, becomes a heart wrenching victim of the times in which they lived. "At the heart of this story, lies the sense that a world Billy once considered safe is in fact, dark and dangerous, powered by the persistent evils of segregation, inequality and suppression." (1) With a masterful stroke for time and place, and with the dialect as existed along the back roads in the plantation country of Louisiana in 1946, you'll believe you were there with Billy and Papa, as they become entangled in the nets, boundaries and lines that suffocated and divided them, and you, too, will become caught up in the lives of these two boys sixty years ago. You'll discover, also, though shaded and hidden away now, many of the boundaries and lines of segregation and oppression are still in place in today's politically correct world. This book is a narrative, stories prompted by "conscience," the conscience of a young boy and the conscience of the man he grew up to be. Its message is for the whole world, right now, about family, relationships, love, joy, and heart-breaking tragedies, with fascinating characters; your heart will vacillate and you'll cry and laugh. (SEBA Award Nominated book, 2006.) (Assigned reading at two Universities where the author lectured.) (1) "And where does a writer find the spirit and heart to relate such a wrenchingly honest and compelling story. Author Bill Hunt presents a moving account of one boy's young life that unfolds as memorably and graphically as the story's carefully honed narrative itself ..." E.T. Marsh, New York Times Best-Selling Author.

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