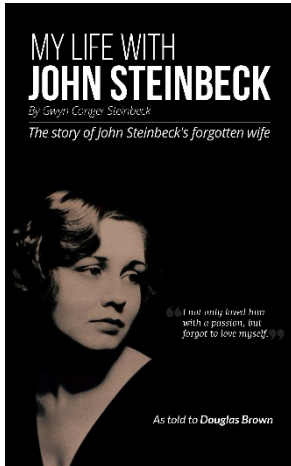


PRESS RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL 06/09/18



My Life with John Steinbeck

The story of John Steinbeck's forgotten wife

**By Gwyn Conger Steinbeck
As told to Douglas G. Brown**

Publishing 6th September 2018

Hardback: £19.99 (978-1-9996752-1-9)

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*“Often I am asked about my years with John, how I considered them.
There is one simple answer – a tragedy.
Yes, a tragedy, but a beautiful one.”*

Gwyn Steinbeck

- **A significant literary discovery, this never before seen memoir delivers a unique and controversial portrait of the great American writer, John Steinbeck.**
- **Lost since 1972, and recently discovered in Wales, *My Life with John Steinbeck* allows Gwyn Steinbeck - John Steinbeck's second wife and the mother of his two children – to tell her story for the first time in 46 years.**
- **2018 is the 50th anniversary of John Steinbeck's death (20th December 1968).**
- ***My Life with John Steinbeck* includes introductions by Gwyn Steinbeck, the interviewer and journalist Douglas G. Brown and the acclaimed biographer of John Steinbeck, Jay Parini**

John Steinbeck, along with Hemingway and Fitzgerald, is recognised around the world as one of the American literary giants of the twentieth century. He won the 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature, a Pulitzer Prize in 1940 and his works, including *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *East of Eden*, are considered classics of Western literature. But what do we really know about the man himself, of his complexities and his nature?

This is the story of the years 1938-1948, which Steinbeck spent writing, travelling and revelling with an assortment of friends, peers and Hollywood legends, including Ernest Hemingway, Charlie Chaplin, Burl Ives and Alfred Hitchcock – brought to life by the woman who witnessed it all alongside him. During these wild wartime years John Steinbeck's published works included *The Moon is Down* (1942), *Bombs Away* (1942), *Cannery Row* (1945), *The Wayward Bus* (1947), and *The Russian Journal* (1948). Steinbeck became a filmmaker with *The Forgotten Village* (1941) and wrote of marine biology in *Sea of Cortez* (1941). His war correspondent reports from Europe he later collated in *Once There Was a War* (1958) and during his time together with Gwyn, he conceived the idea for *East of Eden*.

This is the compelling story of a woman's love for a man hailed by the world for his literary genius. A man who, in Gwyn's own words, “was not a hero. He was only a tremendously complex man who could be very beautiful one moment and then change into something very un-beautiful.”

Continued...

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John Steinbeck left his first wife and muse, Carol Henning, for the glamorous redheaded singer Gwendoline 'Gwyn' Conger, shortly after the publication of his book *The Grapes of Wrath*. Gwyn was 14 years his junior. Even though she was the mother of his two children, Thom and John Jnr, traces of her are hard to find. *My Life with John Steinbeck* exposes the tragedy of their relationship, from the love and tenderness they clearly shared, to the final destruction of their marriage. Gwyn paid a high price for her involvement with the restless, driven genius that was John Steinbeck. Theirs was a marriage doomed to failure.

My Life with John Steinbeck arises from an inherited script discovered recently in Wales. Douglas Brown, a showbusiness correspondent, interviewed Gwyn Steinbeck at length in 1972 in Palm Springs, but never published his work and died prematurely in 1997, aged 58. His daughter Candace Brown, acquired the manuscript and formally gave it to his brother, John Brown, who resides in Montgomery, Wales. An introduction from the respected poet, novelist, biographer, and critic Jay Parini (who wrote *John Steinbeck: A Biography* in 1994) has been added, alongside detailed notes on the characters who feature in *My Life with John Steinbeck*.

My Life with John Steinbeck will fascinate fans of Steinbeck. In a year when female voices are being brought to the forefront, this memoir finally allows Gwyn Steinbeck, a much maligned figure who has effectively been airbrushed out of Steinbeck history, to step out from behind the shadows of this literary legend and reveal her own side to their story.



Gwendoline 'Gwyn' Conger Steinbeck

Gwendolyn was born on 25th October 1916. Gwyn, as she later became known, was the second, yet largely forgotten, wife of John Steinbeck. In his Steinbeck biography, Jay Parini describes the first meeting between Gwyn and Steinbeck in a club, where he was dazzled by her silky voice and long legs. She was asked to be known as Gwyn in 1941 to avoid confusion with her mother who was universally known as 'Big Gwen'. They were married in New Orleans on 29th March 1943. During their time together between late 1938 and 1948, she bore him two children, Thom and John Jnr. Their marriage fell apart, and Gwyn requested a divorce in 1948 on the grounds of incompatibility. Over the years they repeatedly argued about their children, of whom Gwyn had custody. They fell out further, in 1964 in New York's Family Court, following a suit brought by Gwyn's sons against their father for increased maintenance. After an argument over a scooter accident involving John Jr. and a girlfriend, Gwyn and Steinbeck never spoke to each other again. Most scholars accept that Steinbeck based Cathy Trask, the inherently wicked character in *East of Eden*, on Gwyn. Gwyn later moved to Boulder, Colorado, where she died in 1975, aged fifty-eight.



Douglas G. Brown, Editor

Douglas G Brown was a British and American journalist, feature writer and one-time columnist who became editor of the *Palm Springs Desert Sun*. His brother, John Brown, who inherited the manuscript for *My Life with John Steinbeck*, decided to publish it with Lawson Publishing Ltd as his late brother's legacy.



Bruce Lawson, Publisher

Bruce Lawson was born and educated in Kidderminster. After working in Ireland and Jamaica, where he became a rugby international, he returned to the UK to run his own Chartered Accountancy Practice. In 2013 he wrote and published *Charles Rolls of Rolls-Royce*. Bruce now lives in Montgomeryshire and is the director of Lawson Publishing Ltd. He has made an extensive study of Steinbeck's early life and works for two years, has worked closely on bringing *My Life with John Steinbeck* to publication, and is available for interviews.

Bruce Lawson is available for interviews. For more information or to request a press copy please contact: Hannah Hargrave: 07855050137/ hehargrave@googlemail.com