

*Divine Secrets of the*  
**Ya-Ya Sisterhood**



**Rebecca Wells**

*Over the Top Productions*



*The Highland Ya-Yas*  
will review

*Divine Secrets of the*  
**Ya-Ya Sinsterhood**  
by Rebecca Wells

*Wed., Sep. 2, 1998*  
*1 p.m.*

*at the home of*  
*Anne Pinkerton*  
*7921 S. Adams Wy.*

*RSVP 721-6606*  
*Regrets only*

## Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood

by Rebecca Wells

Name	Grade	Comments
Sheryl Davidson ★	A	I really was able to relate to this book through strong characters. Brought me to much laughter & tears. I was able to read the other book "little alters everywhere" which I enjoyed also. Great development of Ya-Ya characters & fun story.
Debbie Davis ★	A	I could identify with the friendships portrayed here. The character development was wonderful. It made me laugh out loud.
Jan Lewallen ★	A	Great character development! I was glad to be involved with the Ya-Yas as an observer only! The Ya-Ya's friendship is enviable, but unrealistic! Fun!
Marsha Boon ★	A-	I couldn't figure out what all the fuss was about for the 1st hundred pages. Then I thoroughly enjoyed the last 200 pages. Made me think about my relationship with my daughter which was good. Disliked the selfishness of these women in regards to their families.
Anne Pinkerton ★	A	Love it! I admire and respect Vivi for all her faults and wonderful characteristics. I could forgive her after reading about her childhood. Sidda was a bit dudley, but the other characters were wonderfully developed. Genuine!
Nora Ruppert ★	A	I could really "recognize" these women even though I don't think I know anyone like them. The characterization & relationships are engaging & I found the book very readable.



*Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*

by Rebecca Wells

Name	Grade	Comments
Judy Bush	A	Great characters - very colorful, warm, funny & sad. The relationship between the yayas was very touching. Rebecca Wells had a gift for writing.

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October 1997

## Women everywhere embrace the Ya-Ya Sisterhood of Rebecca Wells

Interview by Rebecca Bain

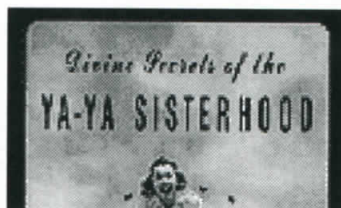
Writer Rebecca Wells is living proof  
that you can take a girl out of the  
South, but you can't take the South out  
of the girl.



She fled her small hometown in Louisiana before the ink on her high school diploma was dry, eventually landing in the Pacific Northwest. She became a successful stage actor, a career that took her to theaters all over the country.

But in her mid-thirties, Rebecca Wells decided to write a novel, and her imagination returned home. "Little Altars Everywhere," Rebecca's first book, is set in Thornton, Louisiana, and it is southern to the bone.

Rebecca Wells had no way of knowing that when she created the "Ya-Yas" -- four feisty women who've been best friends since kindergarten -- and the petite Ya-Yas, their children, that she was unleashing a literary phenomenon. Neither "Little Altars Everywhere," or its sequel, "The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood," has been reviewed by a major publication. Rebecca Wells hasn't appeared on national television or radio, and she never made the bestseller lists. But word of mouth has been a powerful force for Rebecca Wells; "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood" is currently in its tenth printing, and its recent release in paperback has brought on another surge in sales. It's also brought Rebecca Wells devoted fans everywhere.



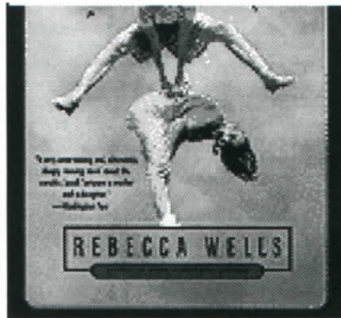
**Rebecca Wells:** You know, I've just been finding that the more that I'm on the road with "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood," I'm meeting incredible women -- incredible women and smart men, let me put it that way. I'm meeting so many women who have girlfriend groups



Robert B. Parker  
 Brenda J. Ponichtera  
 Annie Proulx  
 Mario Puzo  
 Kathy Reichs  
 Julie Rosso  
 Carol Saline & Sharon Wohlmuth  
 Carol Shields  
 Dan Simmons  
 Lauren Slater  
 Elizabeth Marshall-Thomas  
 Joanna Trollope  
 Scott Turow  
 Alice Walker  
 Rebecca Wells

### Children's Authors

Mary Chapin-Carpenter  
 Caroline B. Cooney  
 Paula Danziger  
 David Diaz  
 Mem Fox  
 Kevin Henkes  
 William Joyce  
 Kathleen Krull



who want to tell me about them. And some of their tales are just fabulous! I met this one woman while I was reading at the University of Washington, and she brought me a photo of her whole group of women, and she said, "We're called the Cheetahs." And she said, "'Little Altars Everywhere' and 'Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood' are required reading for us, and four times a year we have a group gathering which we call EstroFest."

What I'm finding is that somehow the books seem to bring out girl groups.

And I use the word girl lovingly. I'm not going to say women's groups, because I think when women get together like this it brings out the part that is girl, and that is a good, good part. Because when we tap into that girl part of us that usually got knocked out of us at about puberty, it's contacting a lot of power, a lot of humor, and a lot of solidarity. I'll tell you, I had the greatest gift this past spring. When I was touring in Austin, unbeknownst to me, my two best friends from childhood showed up with their husbands, and came up afterwards, and we all ended up going out to eat. We had to be dragged out of the restaurant due to the fact that we were screaming out the names of nuns we remembered. "Sister Mary Agnes," we were saying. "Sister Chrysanthia." (laughter)

And then, of course, one of them would say, "I know you built that character on me." And the other one said, "I really think that was me." (laughter) We just had this fabulous time, this reunion that I never thought would be possible, because I'm one of those people who left her hometown the day after she graduated from high school. To go back home and to feel that and to reclaim it has been so wonderful to me, so wonderful that in fact, I'm thinking about spending the winter in Louisiana for the first time in lots of years. I miss the smells, I miss the food, I miss the people, I even miss the craziness.

**Rebecca Bain:** But it's our craziness. That's the thing. There is something about the South, we may be crazy, but we like it that way.

**Wells:** Exactly. I love where I live, I love the Pacific Northwest, it's been such a blessing. But you know, I just miss a way people are in the South. Sometimes I just close my eyes and I hear southern accents and it sounds like happy birds. Happy birds just talking and chattering. I was on a little bitty flight from Raleigh to Nashville last night, and what struck me as I looked around this sixteen seater, eighteen seater, everybody was chatting. People were laughing, they were moving, they were changing seats, they were telling stories. And when the flight landed, people were going, "So nice to meet you." And I was thinking, you know, this just does not happen all over the country. And so, while I've spent a good part of my life learning to drop that southern accent and to really become a voice that was not identified with the South, in fact my writing has always gone back to the South and now I find that I want to go back to the South. So, I have the feeling that the YaYas have led me to this point.

**Bain:** You have always returned to the South in your books. Is that because you are drawing upon your roots, your experiences, the wisdom you've gained over the years to help you write, or is there another reason?



**Wells:** I think when you write a book, something moves through you and helps you out with it. Because you don't have the answers or the wisdom the book needs. You get helped along by an unseen hand, and I don't mean to sound woo-woo about this. Maybe the unseen hand is the imagination or the imaginal characters who are alive within you, and who are being given birth to through your body, because you write with your body. I always get a little nervous when writers take too much credit. I mean, yeah, you do it, you write it, you're the one who gets up at five a.m. in your sweatpants, but a lot of writing and a lot of art, period, is gift, and it's given by grace. At the heart of the best art, as Einstein said, the heart of best art and best science is mystery. Is always mystery. That unexplainable core.

**Bain:** Well, you must be writing something now.

**Wells:** Yes, I am. I'm working on a new book. It's based on a character who I created a long time ago for the stage. She's a Louisiana beautician named Loretta Endless. She lives in the country outside Thornton, which is where the Ya-Yas and their gang live. But she's from a different world. She's sort of a pink collar philosopher. She looks at the entire world through the lens of her commitment to beauty and hair. Loretta has wise eyes, and because she sees everything in terms of this commitment to hair, things take on a clarity for her. When she holds people's heads in her hands . . . the more you think about what being a beautician is like, it's really incredible. The only thing that comes close to it is being a massage therapist, perhaps. In what other profession do you hold someone's head in your hands? It is so intimate. And so to have someone who works with hair, who holds and cradles your head and touches your temples, there's all kind of ways that a wise heart can then be aware of her work as a very real tool for healing. Although Loretta would never say this. I'm calling this book "Splittin' Hairs."

**Bain:** I'm sure your many fans are wondering if you are going to write anything more about the Ya-Yas?

**Wells:** Oh yeah! The book after "Splittin' Hairs" is a Ya-Ya book. I thought at first I would go straight to a Ya-Ya book, but then I realized that I really needed to absorb and learn some of the things that I learned from the two books I had written and see if I couldn't become a better writer and a smarter person before I write the next Ya-Ya book.

**Bain:** And maybe what you need is a winter in Louisiana.

**Wells:** It may absolutely be.

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*Rebecca Bain is the producer and host of "The Fine Print," a program about books on public radio station WPLN in Nashville. This interview originally aired on "The Fine Print."*





## BACKGROUND



# BACKGROUND

Rebecca Wells, actress, playwright, and author of two national bestsellers, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* and *Little Altars Everywhere*, was born in Central Louisiana, where her family has resided since 1795. She grew up on a working plantation and attended the school of Southern Ladyhood and Roman Catholicism. An imaginative storyteller and avid reader since childhood, Wells suspected early on that her goals, ambitions, and expectations were much different than those of most traditional southern women. She saw the world as one giant colorful package just waiting to be unwrapped, and was determined to learn and experience as much as she could as quickly as possible.



Photo: Susan Rothschild

Resourceful as she was energetic, Rebecca began staging plays with her siblings, cousins and friends, eventually performing at her local community theater. Her early experiences on the stage put Rebecca on the road to becoming the writer and performer she is today. Once in college, she began developing a one-woman show as well as a series of short plays.

During this time of self-discovery, she began exploring the country by train, soaking up the local oddities, dialects, and cultures unique to each place she stopped. After her travels were finished, Rebecca enrolled at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, CO where she studied language and consciousness with Allen Ginsberg and Choyyam Trungpa Rinpoche and acting, movement, and voice with members of The Living Theater, among others.

Rebecca later moved to New York City to pursue her acting career and began studying the Stanislavski method of acting, as well as a depth approach that integrates spirituality and performance with Maurine Holbert. "I live in an actor's body, in which the cultivation of sense memory, active listening, and the belief that the sublime can arise out of the most common character, word, or gesture is somewhat of a religion for me." Wells wrote several well-received plays including her solo play, *Splittin' Hairs*, which was nominated for Showtime's Excellence in American Theater and toured in 50 states, and *Gloria Duplex*, which the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* hailed as "one of the glories of the decade."

