



| Q+A |

DARLEEN BUNGEY

A family memoir was a natural step for this biographer

Was it a difficult decision to write about your father in your book *Daddy Cool*?

Not difficult, because I was writing about someone I loved, but also someone I needed to understand more.

Does it make it hard to tell the truth?

My father was truthful to the point of bluntness. He would have dismissed the book if I hadn't attempted to look at the facts square on. I wouldn't have written it if my mother were still alive. The hardest part was writing about myself and speaking about things that I have rarely discussed with anyone.

What are you reading now?

Normal People by Sally Rooney.

Is there a book that made you love writing?

In my mid-teens J.D. Salinger was my first love: *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; For Esme - with Love and Squalor; Franny and Zooey* and, of course, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

What's the best book you've read?

Books talk to you in different ways at different stages of your life. It's an impossible question - like choosing between your children.

A book that had a pivotal impact on your life?

Richard Holmes' *Dr. Johnson and Mr. Savage* encouraged me to write biography.

The book you couldn't finish?

Maybe I should have, I feel guilty,

but it was *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Toole.

The book you wish you had read but haven't got to?

Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The book you are most proud to have written?

In the hope my present book will be read as a tribute to my parents, it would be *Daddy Cool*.

Your earliest reading memory?

Little Golden Books. As I say in *Daddy Cool*: "I adored the pretty face of *Nurse Nancy* and the fluffy three little kittens that lost their mittens and the clever parents in *Fix It, Please*, who patched up any disaster for their rosy-cheeked children by application of either a Band-Aid or glue."

How do you read books? (audio, e-reader, paper)

I prefer hard copy but for expediency I read on the iPad.

Your favourite place to read?

Under the shade of a tree, feet up and my dog curled beside me.

What book do you re-read?

I seldom re-read. Too many books, so little time.

What books are on your bedside table?

By Nightfall, Michael Cunningham; *The Man in the Red Coat*, Julian Barnes; *The Plague*, Albert Camus.

What are you writing now?

I'm considering writing a novel: taking that long dive into a bucket and hoping I don't drown.

Daddy Cool by Darleen Bungey, Allen & Unwin, \$33, out now