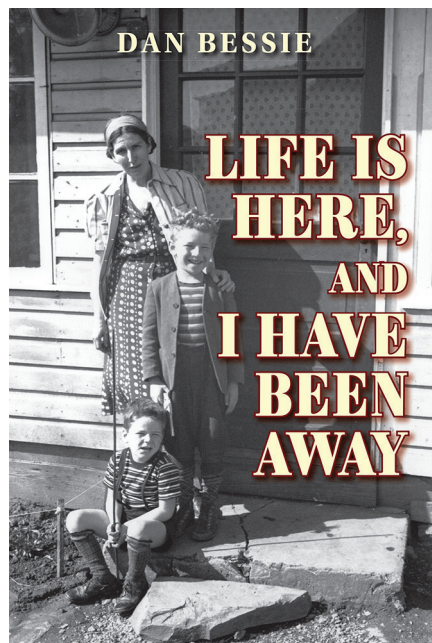


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Life Is Here, and I Have Been Away by Dan Bessie

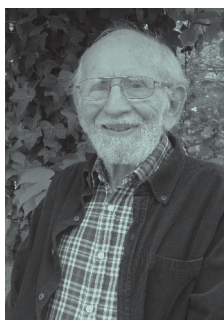
When Mary Burnett finds herself at the very end of her rope, she musters the courage to repel her suicidal demons and commits herself to psychiatric care. And so, her life-saving journey begins—one she vows to take without self-deception, as though looking into a truth-telling mirror.

While she reads decades of her old journals about long-forgotten incidents, the past comes alive—the good times and the bad: growing up with a petulant mother, failed marriages, the birth of two sons while living in poverty, and more.

Resolving her long stream of memories and banishing self-doubt as she completes therapy, Mary zeroes in on three goals: secure a home for her little family, see her boys launched into the world as self-assured young men, and find a way (in her own words) “to be of use, to serve some purpose in this life.”

In *Life Is Here, and I Have Been Away*, Mary Burnett’s son Dan Bessie weaves his mother’s narrative with his own perspective, and in so doing explores exactly how one woman was able to reinvent herself and rebuild her life.

About the Author



Dan Bessie was born in rural Vermont, where his parents eked out a hardscrabble existence during the Great Depression. His early years were also spent in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and finally, Southern California. Following high school, Dan became a shipboard steward in the merchant marine, a longshoreman, and an automobile assembler. Dan worked at various factory jobs to support his wife and children until 1956 when he realized his childhood dream—to become a cartoonist.

Following an apprenticeship at MGM Studios working on *Tom & Jerry*, Dan enjoyed a more than forty-year career in the industry, animating TV commercials and Saturday morning children’s programs, like *The Marvel Superheroes*, *Spiderman*, and *Linus the Lionhearted*. When Dan transitioned to live action, he directed a series of patient advice films for doctors’ offices. Between 1970 and 1975, he ran his own studio, producing films (including several award winners) for schools and libraries, and co-produced the feature *Executive Action* (starring Burt Lancaster) that dramatized the assassination of JFK.

Dan relocated to Santa Cruz, California, in 1978, and until 1995, he continued to write and direct educational and TV films, including the highly successful *Peter and the Wolf*, featuring Ray Bolger (Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*). Between 1986 and 1987, Dan wrote and directed *Hard Traveling*, a feature film that recalled an incident in his mother’s life. By 2006, Dan had authored three published titles and illustrated books written by his then-partner, Helen Garvy. The same year, Dan and his wife Jeanne Johnson moved to southwestern France, where they both continue to write and Dan creates cartoons.

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