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## Looking for Betty MacDonald: The Egg, the Plague, Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle, and I

*Paula Becker*

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**Paula Becker : Looking for Betty MacDonald: The Egg, the Plague, Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle, and I** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Looking for Betty MacDonald: The Egg, the Plague, Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle, and I:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. A Consummate, Well-Written BiographyBy River H.As a lifelong

fan of Betty's MacDonald's memoirs ("The Egg and I" and its three sequels), I have long wished someone would publish a full biography of her life. There are so many hints in the books that make you want to know more about her, her family, and the places she lived in Washington State. When I heard that this biography was in the making, I awaited it eagerly -- and it did not disappoint me! What a wonderful book. Becker is a lively, eloquent writer (the book is worth the purchase if only for Becker's delightful Prologue about how she came to write it) -- and she's an excellent historian, which makes the book a wonderful combination of pithy, meticulously researched facts and very readable narrative. I read it over the course of three nights, and I am about to start re-reading it. I especially appreciated the sensitive way Becker balanced telling the truth without compromising the privacy or dignity of surviving members of Betty MacDonald's family -- or of Betty herself, whose real life was of course far more complex and sometimes dark than her humorous memoirs reveal. Becker's research was prodigious: she uncovered extensive archival materials from a plethora of sources -- including letters and papers from MacDonald's friends and family that had never been made public until now. And she traveled to every place Betty lived from her birth onward; she visited Betty's former homes, the buildings where her father worked, her schools, the streets and paths she and her family would have followed. What a vivid portrait Becker paints for us: of MacDonald's fascinating life, and also of the times and places in which she lived, especially Seattle in the 1920s through the years of World War II. I highly recommend it!

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. The results of "looking for Betty" ...By Jill Meyer  
The author Betty MacDonald is best known for her first memoir, "The Egg and I", but she also published three succeeding memoirs and 5 books for children. Four are the "Mrs Piggie-Wiggle" series and the last is a stand-alone child's book, "Nancy and Plum". MacDonald died almost 60 years ago at the age of 50, but her well-loved books are still in print. Kindle versions of "The Egg and I", "The Plague and I", "Anybody Can Do Anything", and "Onions in the Stew" will be issued Nov 1, 2016. But "who" was Betty MacDonald? Careful readers of her non-fiction can pick up clues about her family - the Bards - and her daughters - Anne and Joan - and her second husband - Donald C MacDonald, but was the happy-go-lucky woman portrayed in her books the real Betty MacDonald? Paula Becker was entranced with Betty and set out to "look" for her. She visited a house in Seattle that Betty and her family lived in during the Depression-years, when Betty - a divorcee with two small daughters - was joining with her family to keep their collective heads above water. From there, Becker decided to write a biography of Betty MacDonald, and has done a pretty good job of it. She has been fortunate to have had access to private correspondence from Betty, both to family and friends and to her editor, Bernice Baumgarten. Becker writes the story of Betty's life from Butte, Boulder, Mexico City, and, lastly, to Carmel, where Betty and Don retired to after the success of the books. But mostly, Becker traces MacDonald's life in the state she made famous - Washington. Paula Becker's book, "Looking for Betty MacDonald: The Egg, the Plague, Mrs Piggie-Wiggle, and I", is an interesting view of all the places MacDonald called home, from the egg farm on the Washington Peninsula, various places in Seattle, Vashon Island, and Firland, a TB sanitarium, where Betty recovered from TB. Becker talks about the Bard family and its quixotic way of dealing with life, as well as Bob Heskett and Don MacDonald, Betty's two husbands. Not left out are the various law suits derived from the characters in "The Egg and I" and Betty and Don's somewhat lackadaisical approach to handling money. All in all, Becker's biography of Betty MacDonald is well-done and also has a good selection of pictures of Betty and her family.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. for a wonderful book; I feel as though you wrote it ...By Kira Norise  
I have read and re-read Betty MacDonald's books so many times. The short bio at the end of each book left so many questions, and this book answered all of them. Such a big personality, overcoming so many hardships, and such a unfair ending to her life. Thank you, Ms. Becker, for a wonderful book; I feel as though you wrote it for me.

Betty Bard MacDonald (1907-1958), the best-selling author of *The Egg and I* and the classic *Mrs. Piggie-Wiggle* children's books, burst onto the literary scene shortly after the end of World War II. Readers embraced her memoir of her years as a young bride operating a chicken ranch on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, and *The Egg and I* sold its first million copies in less than a year. The public was drawn to MacDonald's vivacity, her offbeat humor, and her irreverent take on life. In 1947, the book was made into a movie starring Fred MacMurray and Claudette Colbert, and spawned a series of films featuring MacDonald's Ma and Pa Kettle characters. MacDonald followed up the success of *The Egg and I* with the creation of *Mrs. Piggie-Wiggle*, a magical woman who cures children of their bad habits, and with three additional memoirs: *The Plague and I* (chronicling her time in a tuberculosis sanitarium just outside Seattle), *Anybody Can Do Anything* (recounting her madcap attempts to find work during the Great Depression), and *Onions in the Stew* (about her life raising two teenage daughters on Vashon Island). Author Paula Becker was granted full access to Betty MacDonald's archives, including materials never before seen by any researcher. *Looking for Betty MacDonald*, a biography of this endearing Northwest storyteller, reveals the story behind the memoirs and the difference between the real Betty MacDonald and her literary persona. Watch the book trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Lr6iVK4zWk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Lr6iVK4zWk)

*The Egg and I*, *The Plague and I* and *Anybody Can Do Anything* practically cavort off the page. How did [Betty MacDonald] do it? Seattle author Paula Becker has some answers in her compact, finely crafted biography.--Michael

Upchurch"Seattle Times" (01/01/2016)Paula Becker's astute, affectionate and often startling Looking for Betty MacDonald is the first biography of this singular American writer. . . . The biography fills in crucial and sometimes shocking gaps in her story, rendering MacDonald's achievements all the more extraordinary. . . . Becker is a historian and writes with a historian's precision, but she has a fan's insight and warmth. The result is a thorough and illuminating biography that, with any luck, will lead a new generation of readers to MacDonald's own remarkable work.--Jennifer Reese"Washington Post" (01/01/2016)A smart and immensely readable portrait, taking readers through MacDonald's life. . . . Becker has combed every interview and profile, and her book veritably glows with MacDonald's recaptured wit. . . . Thanks to Paula Becker's exhaustive research and the compassionate, standard-setting book she's shaped out of it, 21st century readers can meet a much fuller and more fascinating version of that complex, challenging, laughing woman. Readers of her books will still want to thank her, but thanks to Looking for Betty MacDonald, they'll know her much better.--Steve Donoghue"Open Letters Monthly" (01/01/2016)The pages zing with unexpected detail and nuggets of lacerating wit. . . . If you're Looking for Betty MacDonald, you need look no further.--Barbara McMichael"Kitsap Sun" (01/01/2016)I was delighted to explore MacDonald's life and work through Paula Becker's thoughtful, painstakingly researched biography, and even more thrilled to see that University of Washington Press is going to be reprinting three hard-to-find later works by the bestselling author of The Egg and I Anybody Can Do Anything, The Plague and I, and Onions in the Stew. . . . If you're not a MacDonald enthusiast, you will be soon. . . . We can be grateful that Becker has preserved it for us in words, and has given us valuable insights into her world, her books, her family, and the writer herself.--Lory Widmer Hess"Emerald City Book " (01/01/2016) "A passionate, wise and tender exploration of a surprisingly compelling life. Becker's fascination for her subject is utterly contagious: I found myself late-night Googling Betty, determined to track down everything she ever wrote!"Julie Myerson, author of The Stopped Heart: A Novel"Thank goodness Paula Becker has resurrected the life story of Betty MacDonald, perhaps the only author who has ever made tuberculosis funny. Carefully researched and written with great warmth and spirit, Looking for Betty MacDonald reintroduces readers to a woman who may have been America's wittiest writer in the mid-twentieth century. We tend to think of observational comedy as a modern phenomenon, but it may have begun over 75 years ago on a chicken farm in Washington State."Barron H. Lerner, MD, PhD, author of Contagion and Confinement: Controlling Tuberculosis along the Skid Road"Readers of Betty MacDonald love her for her pluck and clear-eyed wit. Now Paula Becker presents the writer's brief but exuberant life in this timely and heartfelt biography. As she presses her palms to the polished wood floor of Betty's former home, I felt the melting joy and melancholy of the true soulmate."George Meyer, writer for The Simpsons and Saturday Night Live"A huge hit in her day, Betty MacDonald was too funny and too popular (and maybe too female) to be taken seriously. Paula Becker's Looking for Betty MacDonaldpart biography, part literary criticism, part memoirdoes a cracking job of rehabilitating this sparkling writer's reputation. There are those of us who have been true believers all along, poring over MacDonald's four hilarious and beautifully detailed memoirs of mid-century Northwest domestic life. Becker's book rounds out the picture, weaving the darker strands of the author's life story into a nuanced whole."Claire Dederer, author of Poser: My Life in Twenty-three Yoga PosesAbout the AuthorPaula Becker is a staff historian at HistoryLink.org. She is the coauthor of The Future Remembered: The 1962 Seattle World's Fair and Its Legacy and Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, Washington's First World Fair.