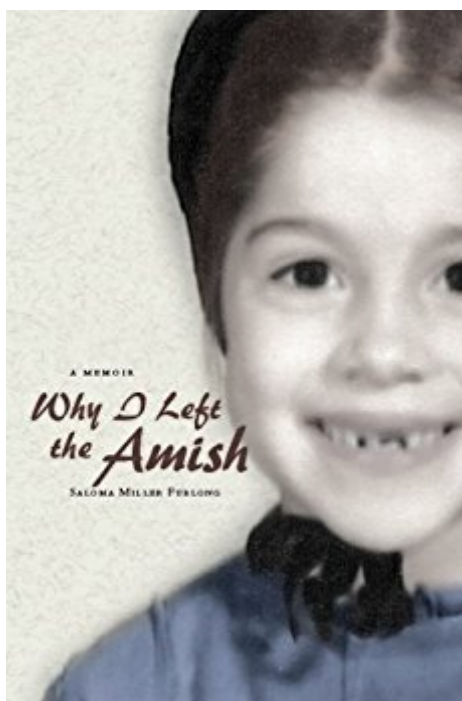


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Why I Left The Amish: A Memoir



Synopsis

There are two ways to leave the Amish—one is through life and the other through death. When Saloma Miller Furlong's father dies during her first semester at Smith College, she returns to the Amish community she had left twenty four years earlier to attend his funeral. Her journey home prompts a flood of memories. Now a mother with grown children of her own, Furlong recalls her painful childhood in a family defined by her father's mental illness, her brother's brutality, her mother's frustration, and the austere traditions of the Amish—traditions Furlong struggled to accept for years before making the difficult decision to leave the community. In this personal and moving memoir, Furlong traces the genesis of her desire for freedom and education and chronicles her conflicted quest for independence. Eloquent and revealing, *Why I Left the Amish* is a revealing portrait of life within—and without—this frequently misunderstood community.

Book Information

File Size: 1553 KB

Print Length: 190 pages

Publisher: Michigan State University Press (January 1, 2011)

Publication Date: January 1, 2011

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B005Y11LMQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #85,009 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #29 in Books

> Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > Midwest #66 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks >

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Customer Reviews

Millions of Americans met Saloma Miller Furlong in PBS's two-hour American Experience documentary: *American Experience: The Amish*. In one short vignette within the two-hour film, viewers heard from Saloma, saw photos from several points throughout her life and learned what

leaving the Amish felt like for her--in short, very painful yet also liberating. Even at the generous length of two hours, Saloma's real story is more complex than PBS and its expert narrators like Dr. Donald Kraybill (co-author of the wonderful *The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World*) could hope to explain. The film suggests that Saloma simply was restless and wanted to continue her education beyond the 8th Grade. In fact, in this recently published memoir, Saloma tells the world "the rest of the story," which involves deep psychological wounds in her father's life that left him a cruel and brutal taskmaster over his children. Worse than that, an older brother who was brutalized by her father wound up becoming a sexual predator in her family--abusing Saloma and her sisters at early ages. Saloma describes this brother as torn in several directions--between his own tortured childhood as a beaten child, the calling of Amish pacifism and forgiveness, and his compulsion toward the serial abuse of others. I won't spoil the outcome, but this is not simply a story of unrelenting tragedy.

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