



# Red Earth Woman

*an autobiography on spiritual healing*



BY LINDA S. BOWLBY, M.D.  
PSYCHIATRIST

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Red Earth

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*Many names and locations have been changed  
to protect the anonymity of those concerned.*

## INTRODUCTION

IN THE CHOCTAW LANGUAGE, “Okla Homa” means “Land of the Red People.” Not only is Oklahoma the land of the red people, it is also the land of the red soil.

I was reared in Oklahoma, but because of its supposed “lack of culture,” I rejected my home state. However, after years of traversing my journey in various mental and geographic states, I have come to know that my roots lie deep within Oklahoma’s soil.

As I drive through the Oklahoma countryside at planting time, I see rich red plowed fields, and the earth’s scent fills my nostrils. When I dig in Oklahoma’s soil, I find layers of red clay alternating with loam and, on the sloping hills, I see outcroppings of red sandstone. My soul resonates with Oklahoma’s red earth.

Many native cultures speak of “Mother Earth” and Her sacred birthings. The ancient Pueblo people’s kivas were places of worship in which they descended into underground structures, as if they were descending into the womb of Mother Earth.

Women and the earth have long been equated. The soil of Oklahoma speaks to my soul, and I am her daughter. I am a “Red Earth Woman.” This is the story of my spiritual journey.

# My Childhood Haven



ON A MAY MORNING, I walk onto my front porch and look west over the tree-covered rolling hills of Oklahoma. Now in my fifties, I am at peace, but peace was hard won.

I live on my 144-acre farm, thirty miles east of Oklahoma City and a mile past Hogback Road. You can't get more country than that. With my own hammer, I built my home one nail, board, and stone at a time. Its outer walls are of red cedar and gray Oklahoma limestone. The roof is corrugated metal, and inside the ceiling is knotted pine. Light fills the rooms through south and west windows. I live "off-the-grid," because the gatekeeper of the building codes is the electric company and, in my usual renegade fashion, I refuse to allow anyone residing in downtown Oklahoma City the right to dictate how my home is built.

My troop of dogs follow me as I walk from the porch to the barn and on to the chicken house. After one of my rural clinics, Ben, a frisky black Labrador, came to me as a stray. Louise and Beth were abandoned and found their way to my farm. Louise is a tan pit bull mix and, as we walk together, she enjoys her favorite sport and clamps her mouth around the tail of my big shirt.

Beth is black, with white markings. Of unknown birth origins, Beth arrived with a wounded and battered spirit. We have a special bond. We came from the same place.

At the chicken pen, only I enter. My dogs like the taste of chicken. I feed and water Pete and my four hens. Pete heralds each new day, and I relish his morning bugle calls. I gather the eggs and compliment the hens on their labors. My chicken pen is surrounded by rose bushes and, on my return to the house, I enjoy the scent of roses wafted by the summer breeze.

My life and torment were a riddle to me until my forties, when I began to remember. In my search for happiness and my life's meaning, I traversed much education and many relationships. I was sure the answers lay outside of myself in learning and with the educated. They, those nameless, faceless dictators of society, told me it was so, but they were wrong, as they were about so many things. I went to college and medical school, followed by a residency and practice in pathology. Years later, I entered a second residency in psychiatry, in which I now practice. I see patients in my city office, but each evening, I return alone to the solace of my farm, where I synchronize my life with the ebb and flow of the earth.

I walk back to the porch and open the screen door. At its familiar creak, I smile. The front porch door of my grandmother Ollie's house had the same sound. In childhood, my grandmother was my only safe person, and her spirit continues to comfort me. As a child, I loved visiting my grandmother's Arkansas farm. Unlike my parents, Grandmother Ollie demanded nothing. She didn't criticize, scold, or punish. In her house, I could just be in my uninhibited silence, for I rarely spoke.

**R**ed Earth Woman is the story of Dr. Linda Bowlby's journey from the depths of suicidal depression. As a child coming of age in rural Oklahoma, Dr. Bowlby was a survivor of satanic abuse. However, it wasn't until many years and self-destructive behaviors later that she remembered her trauma and confronted her rage, fear, and pain stemming from that experience.

With help, Dr. Bowlby found the source of all healing, power, and love—God. In her quest to help others, as a survivor and practicing psychiatrist, she now knows her trauma was a gift and that healing is always possible.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Dr. Linda Bowlby graduated from the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine in 1976. Over the next eleven years, she completed a residency in pathology and worked as a pathologist. After considerable personal evolution and realizing that in pathology she often dealt with diseased bodies secondary to diseased thoughts and their subsequent emotions, Dr. Bowlby began a second residency in psychiatry. After its completion, she spent the next five years in Alaska and worked extensively with women recovering from sexual trauma, alcoholism, and eating disorders. In 1995, Dr. Bowlby returned to her home state of Oklahoma and began her current practice in psychiatry. In her very eclectic fashion, Dr. Bowlby integrates a broad range of spiritual and emotional healing principles with the conventional information of Western medicine. In her practice she believes she cannot guide anyone further in their healing journey than she has personally traversed. Dr. Bowlby's healing journey has been long, arduous, and blessed.*

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