



# HIDDEN WOMEN

**Frankish Splendor & Valor  
in Celtic Europe**

by Jacqueline Widmar Stewart

JACQUELINE WIDMAR STEWART  
JSTEWART@LEXICUSPRESS.COM  
650 686 7260  
www.hiddenwomenbooks.com  
[WWW.LEXICUSPRESS.COM](http://WWW.LEXICUSPRESS.COM)

## Press release

Tracing threads of Europe's past up from the Iron Age, this newest book in the Hidden Women series adds to mounting evidence of the connectivity of Celtic Europe and sheds new light on the history of women.

*Frankish Splendor and Valor in Celtic Europe* tracks the Franks from the gilded era of wealth and technological advancement in pre-Christian Europe. The role of the women in Europe has swung dramatically - from abbesses in illustrious learning centers to refugees in a continent under siege. Relying on advances in archaeology, law, art and literature, the book paints a more accurate picture of the past to explain this change.

The ancient system of networks binding Pannonia with the Rhineland and the rest of Europe is important to understand, especially as it relates to the conquests of Christianity and the feudal church state that ensued. The struggles of Celts to keep their freedom, and the means by which the master-servant model overtook Europe – issues like these deserve close attention especially now, when lines between church and state again are blurring.

The author's on-going study relies on verifiable evidence and on-site investigation for a multi-disciplinary analysis. Since conquerors' objectives have dictated much of Europe's written record, the victors' version of history is not taken at face value.

125 color photographs and 5 maps form part of the narrative of this 200-page third book in the Hidden Women Series.



Mladinska knjiga in Ljubljana, Slovenia

## Personal past

Immigration – why the grandparents left their homeland a century ago - has propelled the efforts to understand ancestral times. What was Europe like a hundred years ago?

Three university degrees, three languages and research for seven books has opened a new view of the European past. Ironically, this has meant digging around the prehistoric era and looking at artifacts that lay quietly underground and unnoticed during the past 2000 years. By adding slices of more recent times - a reconstructed Yugoslavia of 100 years ago against personal experiences in Slovenia over the past 50 years – surprising links to the more distant past have gained visibility.

Even growing up in the enchanted surroundings at Lake Michigan's southern shores seems naturally Celtic now, as do the gatherings that routinely took place there - both familial and multi-national. Enter Carol Ruzic, the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher par excellence, as well as artist/journalist/museum-founder/German/Dutch married to a scientist/publisher/Croatian. Her wise counsel continues to guide today.

By college, the high school studies of French, German and history had provided a good launching pad. Classes about the ancient world at the University of Colorado and the University's outstanding summer program in Greece brought archaeology, history, art and culture to life. A year as a CU exchange student in Bonn, Germany, ushered in opportunities to travel, but also to stay first with a German family, and then in foreign student housing.

It was during that year abroad that the first visit to the grandparents' homeland occurred. Two world wars had raged since their departure; scars from those eras remained painfully evident all over Europe. Other fissures had occurred during that two generations' time-span too. Language, nationality, religion, borders, monetary systems, government, ethnicity – all these wedges had been driven into one single family within seven decades.

The result created a situation both strange and strained. Neighboring towns turned alien to each other. Landscapes that looked exactly the same turned suddenly sinister in their cousins' eyes. The border separating Yugoslavia from Austria might as well have been the Grand Canyon – so daunting that it dared not be crossed even to find an uncle who owned a plant nursery 20 miles away.

Language stood entrenched as a major roadblock. It was only the ability to speak German that permitted basic communication when the author and her parents finally found their relatives' inn in a little village tucked into Slovenia's alpine foothills. These cousins had been displaced to Germany in the Second World War, after being loaded onto rail cars. Impetus to speak the grandparents' native language brought the author back to study for a year at the University in Ljubljana once she had completed a Master's Degree in French at the University of Michigan.

The year spent in the former Yugoslavia under Tito cannot be done justice with a sentence, or even a tome. For present purposes, a key outcome has been the life-long friendship with the roommate from student housing, whose daughter Lia Janželj has translated the first *Hidden Women* book into Slovenian.

Old-country ties like these drew two Stanford Law students back to meet European family soon after the author married Blair Stewart in the early 1970's. The Navy Lieutenant served in the Submarine Service during their first year of marriage, and then began studies at Stanford. Until she commenced her own legal studies, the author worked at Sunset Magazine and Book, including as an Assistant Editor.

It was during the course of those law school studies that her mother's DNA came into full sway. Jewel Widmar was no small force in propelling her daughter toward women's rights. Despite being the daughter of an immigrant coal miner – and more likely because of it – she placed high value on her own three daughters' education. "Take the bull by the horns."

So it was, with Law Professor Barbara Babcock as her law school mentor, that the author completed an externship in gender discrimination. This experience led to a position in the private San Jose law firm of Wylie, Leahy, Blunt & McBride that had just begun proceedings against the City of San Jose on behalf of "Assistant Policewomen," a story unto itself. It was not until some years later, following the multi-faceted enrichment of raising two wonderfully energetic children, that women's rights came to the fore once again.

The interim - filled with pro-bono work as a small claims court judge, assistant council for the local Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District, setting up and for 10 years running the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation to raise funds for teachers of underserved children - also included a tapestry import business and gallery. Acquisition expeditions took the two lawyers deeper into Europe and raised ever more disturbing enigmas about the past.



After almost 25 years with the Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati law firm, Blair began his own legal consulting business. With that change came greater freedom of place. Attention first turned to a study of Lake Michigan's past, including its geological formation and the philanthropy behind the parks at its southern tip. Next the focus moved to Slovenia, piecing together hot springs resorts, castles, alpine huts and coastal migrations as well as Iron Age Noric steel swords and hand-tooled iron situlas for wine. Two books on France followed: a chronological look at the eras of park formation in Paris, followed by an inquiry that started with the town of Troyes. The scope in the Champagne region quickly grew to the pan-European textiles fairs that began and ended there each year, and the even bigger surprise - 200 years of widows who gave the world champagne!

Burgundy seemed the natural successor to Champagne, as a famed wine producing area with an history interlaced with Champagne's. Troyes had been the home of a secular abbey, Bernard de Clairvaux and the Knights Templar. A closer look at Burgundy led to Belgium, though, since the Dukes of Burgundy based primarily in Bruges, Ghent and Brussels. Attempts to ferret out reliable information about 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe led to an unexpected change of tack: disregard the written word unless otherwise corroborated.

Trips to Germany followed. Why the Rhineland? Fifth century author Gregory of Tours wrote that *the Franks came from Pannonia to the Rhineland; the Franks conducted raids against the Romans from East of the Rhine and then wrested control of Trier back from the Romans. The Burgundians defeated the Romans at Worms, regaining their former capital city.* That first journey targeted Worms and Trier – did any traces of Franks or Burgundians remain in the Rhineland?

Plans for that trip had gelled when longtime friend and adviser Irene McGhee recommended a film that caused the Stewarts to add another stop. *The Celts were not barbarians* – that was the remarkable revelation in "The Barbarians", a documentary by Terry Jones of British Broadcasting Corporation renown. *Julius Caesar had massacred an entire village of thousands upon thousands of Celts in Burgundy;* recently, the location had been identified and a museum built. The couple set a course for Alesia and the Rhineland.

The trip to Alesia led to Celtic Auvergne, since Vercingetorix had come from Auvergne to intercede with Caesar on behalf of the women and children there. Not only did Caesar ignore his pleas, but he took Vercingetorix back to Rome and dragged him behind a chariot in the Coliseum until he was dead, as a public spectacle.

The picture of Caesar and Roman "civilization" was rapidly decaying.

Worms itself produced astonishing discoveries. The Nibelungenlied, which the author had learned as the first major piece of literature in the German language, instead proved to have been written from the Burgundian perspective about a battle against the Romans, probably in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century. Some eight centuries later it was reduced to writing. Originally, the story

obviously had not been told in the German language. Worms, as the former Burgundian capital, had been called “Borbetomagus”.

Thus, the Stewarts’ inquiry had expanded to all of Europe and Great Britain. Evidence of Celts has burgeoned all over Europe. The Stewarts themselves experienced a new bonding; Scotland and Slovenia share a rich Celtic heritage.

Others in this saga must be acknowledged. Remy Steiner has added her artistry and internet-savvy to the *Hidden Women* books. Videographer Peter Brown’s additions have taken production to a whole new level. Thanks also to translators Anne and Jurgen Tarrasch, Marie-Hélène Marty, Élodie Pons, Lia Janželj, copy editor Sandra Ohlund, French connection Cam Le and Marwan Ali- Kurd, and to Slovenian relatives.

This bare-bones account of the Stewarts’ personal endeavors to uncover Celtic Europe is fleshed out in the *Hidden Women* series. (The first volume may be read in its entirety on the [www.hiddenwomen.com](http://www.hiddenwomen.com) website; translations are available in French, German and Slovenian.) Their efforts pale in comparison with the wealth of knowledge that awaits discovery.

Please join the quest for Europe’s Celtic past.



## **Paean to Ancestral Women**

All hail to you, mothers of old  
Hail to your sons and your daughters.  
All of them breathe because of you  
They owe their strength to your power.

You are the ones who protected their world  
You built the Europe of yore  
Though conquerors claimed it  
and many defamed it  
Your wisdom and leadership soared.

You have borne the families here now  
You fled with forbearers and hid them  
You fought to the end, defended the fort  
All while you nourished and led them.

Too long you've stayed buried down deep  
Away from the knowing eye,  
Kept from your place up here in the sun  
Where lineage live now and thrive.

Now is your time, o prescient ones;  
Now is the time to acknowledge.  
Let history herald you and your kin  
All hail to you and your knowledge.

