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## For Immediate Release

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### **SWAG—Southern Women Aging Gracefully Are You a SWAG?**

Are you a SWAG?

Ask yourselves these questions. Do you feel the urge to bake a pound cake after reading the obituaries? Have you had professional photographs made of your children barefoot and dressed in their Sunday clothes? Have you monogrammed your shower curtain?

If you are still unsure as to your SWAG status, check with Melinda Rainey Thompson. She explains it all in her new book *SWAG: Southern Women Aging Gracefully*.

In *SWAG*, Thompson covers SWAG nation in all its glory, chronicling the everyday etiquette and eccentricities of a woman's life in the South, as well as the losing battle with aging that all women face. She trains her loving, if sometimes satiric, eye on everything from the proper way to steal magnolia leaves to surviving a family reunion ("always check under those dumplings," she advises).

She also writes about her early indifference to aging, until she discovered "age spots that look like a medieval monk's illustration of the plague."

Thompson intersperses these essays with notes and lists that will help SWAGs achieve their maximum SWAGness and non-SWAGs understand the SWAGs in their lives. She offers, for instance, "Things Not to Say to a New Mother." These include "Did you plan this baby?"; "Is he/she always like this?"; and "He/she is hungry/tired/teething/thirsty. (Unsolicited advice should be punished by instant death.)"

"This book won't raise your consciousness about a new social ill," Thompson says. "It won't make you look younger or skinnier, and it won't improve your stock portfolio.

"It will, however, provide you with a few hours of pure pleasure and guilt-free, non-fattening fun."

*SWAG* also celebrates Southern food, motherhood, and gifted Southern women who can monogram fine linens and sew their children's Easter outfits, while recognizing the danger involved in any Southern woman's possession of a glue gun.



"Somewhere in the South," she writes, "is a Southern male who has had his hairpiece glued on by a helpful wife . . . and I don't want to even think about the denture possibilities."

Though SWAGs have been around for generations, *SWAG* itself began as *The SWAG Newsletter*, which Thompson wrote for the amusement of herself and 20 friends. "It was just for fun, a lark," Thompson says. "I never intended to begin a small business in my dining room, but I discovered an almost insatiable appetite out there for a writer who could give a voice to . . . the ordinary Southern woman." *The SWAG Newsletter* soon reached more than 5,000 subscribers in 38 states.

"I am proud to be a Southern woman," Thompson says, "and I am aging as gracefully as I can without any outright sweating."

**Melinda Rainey Thompson** was the founder of *The SWAG Newsletter*. She is a native of Alabama and was a Kappa Kappa Gamma at Tulane. She holds a master's degree from the University of Alabama-Birmingham, and taught English and directed the Writing Center at Birmingham-Southern College. She lives in Birmingham with her husband and three children.

**Title:** *SWAG: Southern Women Aging Gracefully*

**Author:** Melinda Rainey Thompson

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