



He Wanted the Moon: The Madness and Medical Genius of Dr. Perry Baird, and His Daughter's Quest to Know Him

Mimi Baird, Eve Claxton

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He Wanted the Moon: The Madness and Medical Genius of Dr. Perry Baird, and His Daughter's Quest to Know Him Mimi Baird, Eve Claxton
A *Washington Post* Best Book of 2015

A mid-century doctor's raw, unvarnished account of his own descent into madness, and his daughter's attempt to piece his life back together and make sense of her own.

Texas-born and Harvard-educated, Dr. Perry Baird was a rising medical star in the late 1920s and 1930s. Early in his career, ahead of his time, he grew fascinated with identifying the biochemical root of manic depression, just as he began to suffer from it himself. By the time the results of his groundbreaking experiments were published, Dr. Baird had been institutionalized multiple times, his medical license revoked, and his wife and daughters estranged. He later received a lobotomy and died from a consequent seizure, his research incomplete, his achievements unrecognized.

Mimi Baird grew up never fully knowing this story, as her family went silent about the father who had been absent for most of her childhood. Decades later, a string of extraordinary coincidences led to the recovery of a manuscript which Dr. Baird had worked on throughout his brutal institutionalization, confinement, and escape. This remarkable document, reflecting periods of both manic exhilaration and clear-headed health, presents a startling portrait of a man who was a uniquely astute observer of his own condition, struggling with a disease for which there was no cure, racing against time to unlock the key to treatment before his illness became impossible to manage.

Fifty years after being told her father would forever be “ill” and “away,” Mimi Baird set off on a quest to piece together the memoir and the man. In time her fingers became stained with the lead of the pencil he had used to write his manuscript, as she devoted herself to understanding who he was, why he disappeared, and what legacy she had inherited. The result of his extraordinary record and her journey to bring his name to light is *He Wanted the Moon*, an unforgettable testament to the reaches of the mind and the redeeming power of a determined heart.

From the Hardcover edition.

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