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CONTACT: Andrea Sanchez (512) 206-0229

The Outskirts of Hope: A Memoir of the 1960s Deep South

Author reveals family's journey to the segregated American South

AUSTIN – The 1960s in the South was a time of turmoil, change and struggle for equality. Jo Ivester and her family – one of only two white families and the only Jews in all-black Mound Bayou, Mississippi in 1967 – had a unique, front-row view of racism in America.

Now, almost 50 years later, she's used her mother's journals to chronicle the family's experiences. Ivester's memoir, ***The Outskirts of Hope*** (She Writes Press, April 2015), recounts the positive effect her mother had on the community. From escorting her students to Memphis where they attended a movie and, for the first time in their lives, sat in the main theater rather than the "colored" balcony, to risking her life to march with her students in the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination, Aura Kruger encouraged her students to reach their full potential and ultimately she inspired an entire community.

Ivester was 10 years old when her father transplanted his young family from a suburb of Boston to a small town in the heart of the Mississippi cotton fields, where he became the medical director of a clinic that served the poor population for miles around. Ultimately it was not Ivester's father, but her mother – a stay-at-home mother of four who became a high school English teacher when the family moved to the South – who made the most enduring mark on the town. In *The Outskirts of Hope*, Ivester weaves together her mother's stories and those of her own childhood to paint a vivid portrait of her family's time living and working in Mound Bayou during the height of the civil rights movement.

Booklist said, "This is a sensitive and powerful memoir of racial change in the South in the 1960s." *Kirkus* wrote, "What makes this book particularly valuable is its vivid depiction of the abhorrent consequences of legalized segregation. What gives it heart is the window it opens to the personal journeys of mother and daughter. An important, riveting history lesson that, unfortunately, is still relevant today."

Jo Ivester spent two years of her childhood living in a trailer in Mound Bayou, where she was the only white student at her junior high. She finished high school in Florida before attending Reed, MIT, and Stanford in preparation for a career in transportation and manufacturing. Following the birth of her fourth child, she began teaching, first as a substitute math teacher and then as an adjunct professor at St. Edward's University. She and her husband teach each January at MIT and travel extensively, splitting their time between Texas and Colorado. For more information, please visit www.joivester.com.

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**For more information or to request an interview,
please contact Andrea Sanchez at (512) 206-0229 or andrea@sheltoninteractive.com.**

About Jo Ivester

Author of *The Outskirts of Hope: A Memoir of the 1960s Deep South*



At the height of the civil rights movement, Jo Ivester's father moved their family to the poorest county in the nation to start a medical clinic. She was 10 years old and the only white student in her class.

In her memoir, *The Outskirts of Hope: A Memoir of the 1960s Deep South* (She Writes Press, April 2015), Ivester tells a very personal story of her family's journey to the segregated American South. One of only two white families, and the only Jews, in all-black Mound Bayou, Miss., in 1967, Ivester and her family had a unique, front-row view of America during one of its most racially tumultuous eras. *The Outskirts of Hope* chronicles the experience and how her mother, who became a teacher, inspired the entire Mound Bayou community.

The Outskirts of Hope was called "a sensitive and powerful memoir of racial change in the South in the 1960s" by *Booklist*, and has continued to receive national attention since its release. Ivester has spoken on NPR's "The Author's Corner" and "Texas Standard," and has been featured in the *Austin Chronicle*, *Miami Herald*, and many

other media outlets.

After her time in Mound Bayou, Ivester went on to finish high school in Florida and attend Reed College, where she studied physics. She then received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and urban planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Later she graduated from Stanford University with an MBA in preparation for her career in transportation and manufacturing.

Ivester has worked for large organizations including the San Francisco Municipal Railway, where she served as a deputy general manager, and Applied Materials, where she ran a factory. She began to teach following the birth of her fourth child, first as a substitute math teacher and then as an adjunct professor at St. Edward's University.

Ivester and her husband help teach a course each January at MIT and travel extensively, splitting their time between Texas and Colorado. In her free time, she likes to hike and ski in the mountains and walk on the beach.

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Praise for *The Outskirts of Hope*

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– Booklist

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– Kirkus Reviews

“A yesteryear tale (1967) that could not be more pertinent and helpful to the racially complex and perturbed time we are living in now.”

– Norman Lear, TV Producer

“A powerful personal perspective of a tumultuous time in America, seen through the eyes of a mother and daughter navigating family and societal currents in the midst of the civil rights movement.”

– Barry Curtiss-Lusher, National Chairman of the Anti-Defamation League

“Not all stories about the south are fictional and have characters in them named Atticus and Scout. Some are true and have real people in them named Aura and Jo. But just as Atticus and Scout have seared themselves into our cultural consciousness, Aura and Jo will take up residence in your own after reading *The Outskirts of Hope*. I began this book thinking it was about civil rights and Mississippi and a Jewish family’s singular, brave saga there in the 1960s. I ended it realizing it is a story about us all. It is an American one. And it is one, told forgivingly, about forgiveness.”

– Kevin Sessums, NY Times best-selling author of *Mississippi Sissy* and *I Left It on the Mountain*

“*The Outskirts of Hope* is a courageous confession of a daughter about her mother and herself that lays bare the front line of the American civil rights struggle of the 1960s. While this was certainly a period of great figures doing dramatic acts, this book instead brings the reader into the engine room, where the underlying support base was proving its mettle. This is the real story of how revolutions succeed.”

—Steve Adler, Mayor of Austin, Texas

“*The Outskirts of Hope* is a highly personal narrative that shines a light on the struggles within the Deep South in a passionate, moving way. Told with wit, warmth and heart, this family’s story places the reader right on the ground as Mound Bayou, Miss., copes with a world reluctant to change, providing an intimate view of the civil rights movement most have never even considered.”

– Anthony Rudel, author of *Hello, Everybody!: The Dawn of American Radio*

“A powerful story of the effect one family has on a community that fills in another piece of the civil rights movement.”

– Story Circle Book Reviews

“This is a fascinating tale of a family who took their three youngest children to an essentially all-black community in the Mississippi Delta, where the father opened a medical clinic and the mother taught in an all-black school. The kids survived, albeit not without drama.”

—Dave Richards, lawyer, U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner in the 1960s