

Contact: Jim Perlman, Editor and Publisher,  
218-724-1653, [holycow@holycowpress.org](mailto:holycow@holycowpress.org)

"In *Shelter Half*, Carol Bly has given us **a work of art and wit and spiritual vigor**. As in her short stories, she brings her Minnesota world to life in the names of places and people, in the resolutely nice, optimistic rhythms of their speech, and the sad distant sense of the land. Her people are endowed by their creator with the dignity of choice, and the choices they face here are charged with the possibilities of moral heroism and tragic moral collapse, and, occasionally, a kind of hilarious moral farce. **Whether we live in Minnesota, New York, or Kentucky, we recognize this world--it is our own.**" – Tobias Wolff

# SHELTER HALF

by Carol Bly

"Carol Bly writes with compassion, rich detail, and sly humor about a collection of quirky characters who just might comprise our own community. She invites the reader on a pilgrimage to explore the moral workings of a collection of saints and sinners. With **the kind of large intelligence that outdistances most writers today**, Bly examines the customs and internecine plots of small town life, her ear perfectly attuned to the down-home speech and wry wit of her people. **A lifetime of hard fought and hard won wisdom surfaces on every page, and I can't imagine anyone being unmoved by the reading of it.** This novel is going to be the book you give, the book you keep, and the book you treasure because **you'll never see its like again.**" – Jonis Agee

"Walt Whitman said, 'If you ever want me again, look under your boot soles.' Carol Bly might have said, 'If you want me again, read *Shelter Half*.' **It is, and will be, Carol Bly's only long fiction, the summation of thirty years of short stories and essays--all the ideas, characters, ethical quandaries, sly humor, voice and wisdom--a capsule of her life's work between covers.** In its pages, a world is created with great ingenuity that will surprise and delight the reader: a mysterious murder, shadowy characters, small town foolishness, and a heroine finding her path back from despair. This mirror held up to the world, is made with a wise hand that intends to reflect our own face. **That is Carol Bly's genius--to bother our conscience, then to show us what a decent, honorable life might look like.** Read *Shelter Half*, my friends, and be delighted and instructed together." – Bill Holm

"The question that drives this **mesmerizing novel** is not why someone committed a murder, but why ordinary people can sometimes rise to acts of great courage and compassion, at the risk of career, reputation, and even life itself. The answers are as various as the pageant of characters who fill these pages, from a German war veteran to a public relations executive, from a social worker to a strawberry farmer, from a bartender to a priest. In tracing the web of relationships in a northern Minnesota town, **Carol Bly invites us to examine our own communities and our own hearts.** She draws on decades of observation and hard study--observation of her neighbors and our corporate culture, hard study of history and the human brain. **Rarely does a work of fiction combine so much intelligence with so much gusto.**" -Scott Russell Sanders

"Carol Bly is a social worker, a social critic and an extraordinary writer. **No one has a better feel for the lives of ordinary people and no one can tell a better story.** As she presents the points of view of citizens of St. Fursey, she explores the nature of good and evil. **She writes in a way that entertains us even as it fosters the growth of our moral imaginations.** I highly recommend *Shelter Half*."

– Mary Pipher

### ***A Midwest Connections Selection of the Midwest Booksellers Association***

SHELTER HALF, Carol Bly's first and only novel, is being published by Holy Cow! Press on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 (248 pages; \$15.95/original trade paperback). SHELTER HALF, finished just before Bly's death this past December, takes place in a small northern Minnesota town where a dead body is discovered by the side of the road in early winter. As Scott Russell Sanders writes, "the question that drives this mesmerizing novel is not why someone committed a murder, but why ordinary people can sometimes rise to acts of great courage and compassion, as the risk of career, reputation, and even life itself. The answers are as various as the pageant of characters who fill these pages, from a German war veteran to a public relations executive, from a social worker to a strawberry farmer, from a bartender to a priest. In tracing the web of relationships in a northern Minnesota town, Carol Bly invites us to examine our own communities and our own fears."

**Carol Bly** is best known for her sharp and compassionate short stories and essays that are infused with what Tess Gallagher called Bly's "spiritual and moral intelligence." Her books include *Letters from the Country*, *The Tomcat's Wife*, and *My Lord Bag of Rice: New and Selected Stories*. Her stories have appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*; several *Pushcart Collections*, including the twenty-five-year anniversary edition; *The New Yorker*, *Ploughshares*, *Glimmer Train* and other journals. A Minnesotan all her life, Bly was born in Duluth, lived for many years in Madison until she moved to St. Paul. It is only fitting that SHELTER HALF is *A Midwest Connections Selection* of the Midwest

Booksellers Association.

**SHELTER HALF**

**by Carol Bly**

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For further information, please contact: Jim Perlman, Editor and Publisher, Holy Cow!  
Press, 218-724-1653, [holycow@holycowpress.org](mailto:holycow@holycowpress.org)