

[PDF] The Cowboy Way: Seasons Of A Montana Ranch

David McCumber - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Description:

The cowboy as hero, David McCumber reminds us, is one of America's abiding myths. John Wayne, Clint Eastwood--even the ubiquitous Marlboro man--endure as symbols, perhaps because of our need to believe (in a technology-savvy, urbanized culture) that "cleaner country ... something rougher, less despoiled, harder to win" still exists.

At midlife, McCumber abandoned "corporate striving" in California and spent a year learning what it

means to be a real cowboy at one of Montana's largest ranches. His unsentimental, gritty, yet evocative account defies and confirms our preconceptions. Cowboying, he quickly learns, has always meant backbreaking, isolating work: mending endless stretches of fence, weeks spent digging ditches, rousting livestock in subzero weather. But ranch life has not been immune to the times: today's cowboys choose four-wheel drive vehicles over horses, regularly deliver calves by cesarean section, and might as easily hold a degree in English as in agriculture.

Ultimately, McCumber reveals that the cowboy is alive and kicking in the West, his ethic defined by a firm belief in the value of hard work and an unshakable respect for the weather and the land. "Cowboys are heroes," he tells us, "but not of the Hollywood variety. Their heroism comes in small portions. John Wayne may have saved the stampeding herd in Red River, but in real life the herd is saved one calf at a time." --*Svenja Soldovieri* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Newly divorced, having left his job as assistant managing editor of the San Francisco Examiner, McCumber (*Playing Off the Rail*) set out to see what life as a cowboy was like. The guest was part of what he calls "a rather thoroughgoing midlife metamorphosis." It is telling that he chooses the word "metamorphosis" rather than "crisis," for McCumber eagerly embraces his new life and spends hardly any energy mourning his old one. He soon found out that the cowboys of a real working ranch are not the stuff of popular culture. For starters, they rarely use horses (they often use what McCumber calls "Japanese quarter horses," a nickname for four-wheel all-terrain vehicles). Death is a constant threat to the herd and to the area's wild animals. Because of that, perhaps, McCumber and the other men of the ranch have a genuine respect for animals. But it's a tough respect, one that inspires McCumber to slit the throat of a doe who has cut an artery on a barbed-wire fence. What McCumber reveals of himself, he does so indirectly, through his descriptions of life on the Birch Creek Ranch, where the seasons are marked by the extremes of weather and the stages of cattle ranching?calving, branding, fencing, etc. Even his brief journal entries, interspersed throughout the book, look outward rather than inward. McCumber can be salty in one sentence, lyrical in the next, whimsical, stoic and, only occasionally, wistful. His book will creep up on readers, who will come away with admiration for McCumber and a strong, vibrant sense of the ranching life he has come to love.

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