

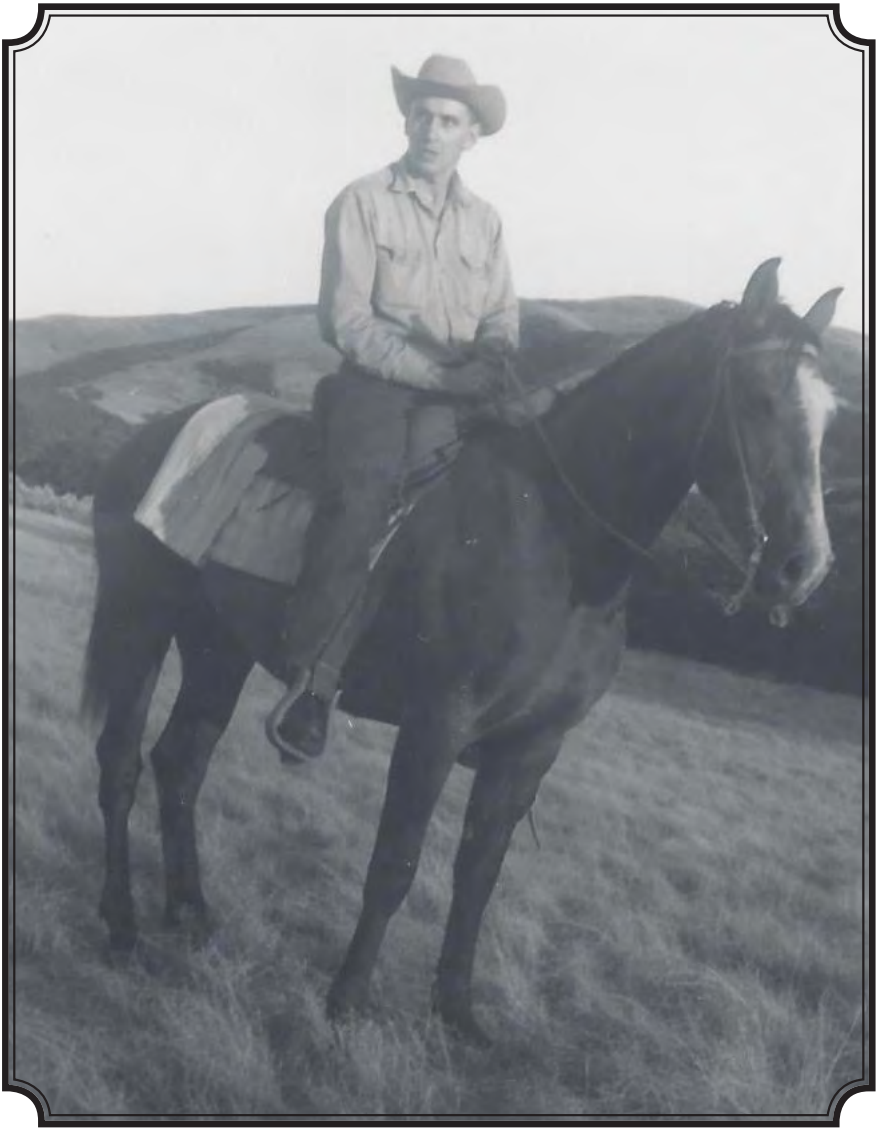
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# MY HIGH PRAIRIE

Douglas Taylor

Compiled by Bonnie Long



*Doug Taylor as a young man.*

*# My High Prairie*

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≡ Foreword ≡

## ≡ Preface ≡

I have lived my entire life and tried my best to stay out of trouble. Although sometimes the best laid plans of both mice and men sometimes go astray. I was never quite sure about my identity. When I was little, I was called either "little Ben" or "Ben's son" then I became "the kid." After growing up and working on construction, I was asked where I lived. Then I became known as "High Prairie." My wife Dona worked in the warehouse at Triamond Fruit in Hood River, and when they closed, she worked and became head cook at Lyle school. I became known as "Dona's husband." Then after I lost Dona, I became known as "Martin's dad." I am sure I am known around as High Prairie's worst cook. But thank goodness I get lots of support and advice. I am still known by a few around as "High Prairie." It is a good place to be.

—Douglas Taylor

CHAPTER ONE

≡ NEIGHBOR ≡

MANY OF YOU KNOW, High Prairie has had what we may call a building boom and gaining many new residences. Over the years I have had the good fortune to get acquainted with many. In the course of time some have come and gone and some passed. But over the last five or six years, we have gained many and it seems that I have not gotten around to meet most, which was always my pleasure. Now there is an old saying if I can quote it correctly, "If one stays in the same place the world will come by." Now I have not been doing my part, but surprisingly I have been meeting, a bit slowly, so many fine people or neighbors as we call them. I am sure it would be a pleasure to call them friends. It always makes my day to meet wonderful people.



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, before gas prices went through the roof a neighbor high school girl called and asked for some help. She could not get her pickup started so that she could drive 25 miles to work in a fast food restaurant. I responded and going where the pickup was parked I was not able to get to it to give it a jump start. I also knew that she was taking some college classes I noticed the pickup was of the older variety and with very low gas mileage. I could see that her expenses would almost take all she would make in a day. Yet she was very willing to do it. As I was unable to help her start her pickup I discussed with my wife if maybe we could take her to her job.

Anybody with her determination to succeed needed a little support. It makes one proud to know that we have youngsters coming along like her and many others.



**W**ELL FOLKS, I know spring is soon to be arriving. We may have a little winter left, but we are getting closer. I have been a long time observer of people coming and going. May I say I am certainly impressed with the few that I met over time. As I understand some folks in town do not know even their next-door neighbor. I guess we are different out here, even a neighbor 10 miles away can be a neighbor and friend. Sometimes we just need to get acquainted. The ones that I have met are very friendly generous cooperative and industrious. I recall the 4-H motto, to “make the best better.” I think so many are following that plan and I am impressed. We all try to be good and some try to be better.



**A**S MANY OF YOU MAY or may not know, the Klickitat County Senior Service serves a lunch at the Lyle Lions Club every Tuesday at noon. The price is very reasonable, and you do not need to be a senior to participate. They have a very good volunteer cook and many support helpers to serve you. It is a very good place to get acquainted with your neighbors. It would be wonderful if we could do the same with our community center, but it does take a lot of work and planning. I do try to go down



every Tuesday when I can, it is very nice to visit with some folks that I know and always nice to meet new folks. There is a saying “I am as old as I have ever been, and I am as young as I’ll ever be.” I do not use the age numbers. I have met some of you that have recently arrived, but I would find it my pleasure to meet more of you. I am just guessing, but I do know that if the powers that be find that there is not enough interest, the project may be disbanded. It is my wish that I get to meet more of you next Tuesday.



**N**OW IT COULD BE SNOWING or raining outside but it’s always sunshine in my house, with some of my younger neighbors stopping by. Some have been here for years and others are simply new. I always seem to address them for a problem to solve on my computer. Some I was able to solve when I was somewhat younger. It seems if you have not done this for a while, it becomes more complicated and frustrating to us. Sometimes they solve my problem in a short time but it is always taken away from their time, I realize. I thank you so much my problem solvers, you are certainly appreciated.



**A**PRIL 22 WAS A GREAT SPRING DAY for a party, the High Prairie Community Council was honoring the local fire men and women. I was chauffeured to the community center. As I entered the building, I was greeted by our local Fire Chief and High Prai-

rie Community president. I noticed as all patrons entered the building, they were greeted by a very capable lady Fire Chief. As I entered the building, I was greeted by a wonderful display of beautiful, decorated hall and tables. There were many hours of planning and accomplishment. Many were involved, although it was a very wonderful catered event. The center was filled with local supporters and several from Lyle. We have always been well supported by Lyle, Centerville and Goldendale fire districts. The local sheriff's office, Public Utility District and Department of Natural Resources have always been available when needed. After the dinner was served, our chief awarded many of the fire persons with awards for their achievements. Many have been involved for several years. The HPCC president surprised many of us by announcing they had received a state grant for many upgrades to our center. Many locals have been working to accomplish this grant. Kudos to those very hard-working people. It is always gratifying to see those very deserving community supporters recognized. There was a video of some of the history of the organization of both the community center and the fire department which was very well presented. I had a very enjoyable evening hearing of the accomplishments and meeting many many not old but older friends. You people are just the greatest.



THIS MAY BE OF INTEREST TO SOME,  
and I know others not much. It is a rainy foggy day.

Waking up and thinking it probably was going to be a quiet day and not much activity. Then it dawned on me that I had been invited for a ride to the Lions Club breakfast. Rushing around in my slow manner, I was almost ready when he arrived. Getting everything ready for the trip, we arrived just a little later, but in plenty of time to get our order in and to be waited on by the most beautiful people, from the cooks to the servers. Served a very delicious breakfast as usual, with plenty of coffee and juice, met many old friends, new friends and many just good people. Now to report what I wanted to tell others about a (frequent) conversation that always gets good results: discussing my call button that I wear around my neck and hoping to get an improvement. Being that it only has a microphone and a receiver if I am in the house, my worry was that if I was outside I would never know if I was getting support if needed or not. My driver suggested that I put 911 as the first caller to call an emergency. He set this up with the company for me. Now I hope that is never needed, but it does give one piece of mine if needed. I have found that many times discussing a problem with your friend or neighbor they may have an excellent idea for one to use. I was thinking that I may have to change companies, but I think this will work very well. It is now going into the afternoon, and it has been a very pleasant day. No pictures my friends, how do you picture a thought?



WELL, GOT UP A LITTLE EARLIER  
this morning too early to make a pot of cof

fee. Had a cup left over from yesterday, warmed that up in microwave, it tasted pretty good. While I was drinking my coffee turned on the computer to see whose dog was visiting what neighbor. I had a dog like that once. Found if she did not do any trouble or chase livestock or game, one met lots of nice neighbors that way. By this time, it was time for the pot of coffee and to make breakfast and the coyote's favorite meal—lamb chops. They were so delicious I see why the coyotes' smile when they go by the house.



## “Our Phantom and Good Deeds”

(from *The High Prairian*, March 2012)

**T**HE PHANTOM STRIKES AGAIN on High Prairie, this time painting the sign over the Lone Pine Cemetery. This spring as in past years the cemetery gets a good mowing. Also, some much needed trimming. Many times, one comes home from shopping to find a box of peaches, asparagus or some other nice gift laying on their front porch. Other times I have ventured to the barn to find a cat or maybe a rabbit. We have acquired peafowl that are friendly and productive. Mules have wandered in and even a donkey or two. These were always claimed after us finding the owner. For several years local cattle were wandering and usually had an appetite for the more succulent of foods and loving vegetables.



WILD TURKEYS seem our most reliable visitors now, as they generally come by to see if any corn is left from the chickens. Sometimes just a dozen or so and other times maybe up to a hundred. I marvel that the birds can stand on frozen snow without their feet freezing. . .



ONE TIME I WAS GIVEN A GOAT and it stayed pretty much with the cattle. During the winter it would be seen right in the middle of one of the cattle feeders. I was getting a little upset with this situation, so one day I loaded up the goat and to the sale yard I went. The next morning feeding the cattle, the goat was in the middle of the cattle feeder again. Doing a double take and thinking I was seeing mirages, I tossed in some hay and the goat went to feeding. After telling my wife about the unbelievable unfathomable sight, a neighbor stopped by. After telling him the story, he explained to me that a neighbor about two miles away had bought the goat from The Dalles auction. He had turned it loose thinking it would stay, but off it went for good company and great alfalfa.



THERE IS NO PICTURE, you will have to just imagine you're looking at a computer that only does what the operator says and garbage in garbage out. Nice to live in the neighborhood where one is fortunate to have someone you can call on when problems arise. My sto-

ry, yesterday, I was trying to get into a computer account. Everything I tried would come back and error I tried many different combinations with always the same result. I called the help center, was told I had 17-minutes wait time. I had already wasted an hour and 17 minutes did not seem like the answer I needed. I had things so screwed up I knew I was in trouble I finally gave up and called a neighbor that had helped me before he was very willing (I think) said he would come by in the morning. To my joy he came by and worked on this blasted computer until it got to working tip top. So appreciative.



**H**IGH PRAIRIE HAS ALWAYS BEEN a fun place to live, never knowing what to expect next, but always it has been interesting.



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CHAPTER THREE

 FRIEND of ANIMALS 

**M**Y FATHER TELLS IN THE EARLY 1920s the area was heavily populated with prairie chickens and grey squirrels. With lots of skunks. With no ground squirrels (grey diggers) and very few deer back then.

I have never seen a prairie chicken here. In the 1950s grey squirrels were scarce and grey diggers and deer were starting to increase, with many blue grouse and Hungarian Partridge. Chuckers were planted later. The deer population started exploding when the game department planted mule deer at Wahkiakus and then they and black tail deer were thinned with the increase of predators. I have not seen porcupines in our area for years, yet they were very common 40 years ago. One thing I have noticed: several years ago the Chinese pheasant was very prevalent in Warwick, Centerville and beyond. For some reason the Chinese pheasant has never taken hold on the Prairie. Many times the game department planted birds, but they never seem to take. Several years many of the locals got together to build bluebird houses, which many were distributed and increased the bluebird population.



**I**LIVE IN AN AMAZING SPOT. The scenery is constantly changing. I may look out my window and see Robins grabbing earthworms from the lawn or there may be goldfinches taking seeds from the heads of dandelions. Always have a great variety of birds including Ravens and Magpies coming by, checking things out. I may see a



coyote walking by my fence line or maybe a bobcat in my barn yard. Several deer may come in to browse on the Rose bushes or the apple trees, and occasionally a Turkey. Many times many turkeys come filing in and go through the yard on their way to better pickings. Now the Eurasian doves and turtle doves sometimes come together to see if there may be spare morsels that the chickens or ducks have missed. The California quail do have to be very alert because they do attract the occasional hawk. One time I even had an eagle sitting in my front yard having a Turkey dinner. The raccoons usually come at night and I mostly don't see them but I can tell they have been here. The same with the occasional skunk. One night I came home from work, parking my pickup as usual. I went out the next morning to go to work and found the pickup would not start. I found that a pack rat had started to make his home with the wiring in the pickup. Needless to say I found an alternate route to work that morning. I live in a colder spot so that I get to see many occasions of spring arriving. It just can't get any better, folks.



**I**HAVE A LITTLE DISPLACED SEEDLING in my front yard. Last summer the deer ate all the lower leaves and only left two branches out of their reach. I thought maybe all the other branches may be dead. Now this tree is approximately 6 feet tall and I am watching it come to life. To my amazement even the lower limbs are leafing out. It is interesting to me that with the sap coming

up from the bottom to the top, one would think the lower leaves would grow bigger than the top as it progressed to leaf it out. But that definitely is not the case-- all leaves seem equal. I have mowed my grass once and looking at it, it has grown and caught up with the uncut grass. Now I guess it's time to mow again, good exercise. Especially when the mower does all the work. When you are not having anything better to do than watching nature, you find it's very interesting.



**D**EER HUNTING SEASON IS ON in the state of Washington, and when hunters get together there's usually a story or two. I heard one story about a town where they had lots of raccoons and coyotes. Occasionally they would see a raccoon without its tail. This assumption was that the coyote was looking for a meal and the raccoon was trying to escape, and all the coyotes got was to bite off its tail. Such I had never heard and seemed a little strange to me. But I have a picture to show you of a couple skunks. One night as the picture shows they both had bushy tails the next night one only had a long tail but not bushy. Maybe there was a connection or not I am not sure, but we had seen at least two coyotes working around even in daylight hours. So, the connection may very well be possible, that this skunk owes his life to a bushy tail. I would like to add that skunks can be detrimental in some instances. But they have been very useful to me for mouse control and grasshopper control, The pay that they receive is very min-

imal compared to the work they have been used for compared to the destruction of the mice and the grasshoppers.



I HAVE NOTICED I HAVE just a little extra time to observe some of nature. I have been watching some of my birds of the yard. I have noticed one of my Turkey hens has two separate beards— not just two coming out together. Now one would think turkey hens would not have beards, but I do see several. I have also noticed a male California quail with two top knots, which I have never seen before. I have also read on Facebook my friend Jody of Goldendale has a lawn bird with antlers.



FROM THE LOOKS OF THE OAK TREES, it looks like we are having a good crop of acorns this year. The turkeys and the deer will winter better. It is a living movie folks, and one never gets tired of the action.



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CHAPTER FOUR

≡ COMPANION ≡

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, TOM just showed up here as a possible stray or maybe someone wanted a home for him rather than their own. He was in good shape, but looking for a home. We generally do not take them in as pets, as we always used to have our own. But we invited him in. We had him fixed and were taking care of him, when Dona became ill. Our daughter Nancy came to take care of her mother and around that time Tom had mistakenly decided to cross the road and got hit. He was very damaged with broken bones from a vehicle. As Nancy had found him and knew a friend that would take care of broken cats, he was taken to a veterinarian with many cuts and bruises and three bones broken in one leg. With the care of Nancy and others he became a member of our family.



AFTER HIS RECENT SHAVE, Tom still always enjoys looking out the window watching the cars go by. When one comes up the driveway, he gets all excited. If he is not sleeping (which he is also good at) when you come to the door and enter, he becomes a much younger cat. He sometimes gets so excited, he runs around the house, jumps on the chairs and sometimes to get their attention he will hide behind a chair and when they walk by, he will either grab their skirt or pant legs and when they notice he runs and laughs. He is telling you that he loves you and glad that you stopped by. Tom persists in going out in the cold weather, but he shortly changes his mind and

wants back in the house. He very much still loves humans despite, what we may have done to him. Do not let the chain of love stop with you.



**N**OW AS I WAS RIDING AROUND all the area Tom the cat jumped on my ATV, which he always enjoys riding with me. I have been complaining all summer about his shedding hair. I noticed he is now getting a heavy thick coat of hair. Do you suppose that is an indication of a cold winter. Now maybe it only remains that Tom will keep warm this winter if we do have a cold one.



**T**O GIVE AWAY TO A LOVING HOME:  
One neutered lovely male cat. House trained, loves to snuggle. Prefers staying in the house uses favorite chair, always loves to greet guests and explore their cars. Smells strongly like a skunk. Bring cage.

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