



Rough Breaks: A Wyoming High Country Memoir

Laurie Wagner Buyer

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When twenty-eight-year-old Laurie Wagner hired on at the O Bar Y Ranch in western Wyoming, she was a novice to ranching life but no stranger to isolated locations. As revealed in her celebrated memoir *When I Came West*, Laurie had already spent years living in a rustic cabin in the Montana wilderness with a troubled Vietnam veteran. *Rough Breaks* recounts the next chapter in her life, beginning with her painful break from Bill Atkinson, and unfolding into a modern-day saga of life on a remote cattle ranch.

Written in the author's trademark lyrical style, *Rough Breaks* is based on the diaries Laurie kept for nearly six years as she lived and worked on the O Bar Y. Central to the story is Mick Buyer, a cowman stubbornly committed to holding onto his beautiful piece of land in the Wyoming high country and continuing the way of life he learned from his father and grandfather. As his marriage begins to fail, Mick and Laurie develop an increasing affection for each other, even as she also becomes close to his wife, their children, and neighboring ranchers.

With grace and wit, Buyer evokes the joys and travails of life on a ranch—cutting and baling hay, repairing old vehicles and machinery, fixing fences, birthing calves, tending to beaver dams and elk herds, and struggling to pay the mortgage and endless veterinary bills. In the spirited tradition of Teresa Jordan and Mary Clearman Blew, *Rough Breaks* is a uniquely honest and heartfelt contribution to the realm of memoir by contemporary women ranchers.

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