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Bob Welsh

From the time of Homer, readers have been mesmerized by the power of stories set to verse. Now master storyteller Bob Welsh creates a vital link in this tradition with this treasured new collection of poems spun around campfires over the past 40 years.

A classic outdoorsman, Bob Welsh has enjoyed a lifetime of hiking, hunting, camping and of course, storytelling. Drawing from a lifetime of experiences that include a tour of duty in the U.S. Navy and 29 years as an Ohio State Trooper (including stints as a survival instructor and tactical commander of the Patrol's Special Response Team), Bob weaves both fiction and fact into these memorable poems. Always with an eye to exploring new territory, his imagination ranges from the spit 'n polish military to shaggy mountain man, from the shimmer of dry plains heat to the Antarctic's frozen grip, from sudden miracles to a simple song.

Will you want to lend this book to a friend? Absolutely. But give it away? Never.



\$15.95 US

STORYTELLING

ISBN 0-9754576-0-8



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Cover design by MomentuMedia  
Cover illustration by Kate Hurst

BOB  
WELSH

EMBERS *from a* STORYTELLER'S MIND



REVISED

# EMBERS

*from a*  
STORYTELLER'S  
MIND

• B O B W E L S H •

REVISED EDITION



*Embers From a Storyteller's Mind*

Embers From a Storyteller's Mind  
by Bob Welsh

Revised 2006

Cover by Kate Hurst

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ISBN: 0-9754576-090000

Layout by  
Michele Welsh, MomentuMedia

“**T**he man is a success who has lived well,  
laughed often, and loved much; who has  
gained the respect of intelligent men and the  
love of children; who has filled his niche and  
accomplished his task; who leaves the world  
better than he found it, whether by an  
improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued  
soul; who never lacked appreciation of earth’s  
beauty or failed to express it; who looked for  
the best in others and gave the best he had.”

— *Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson*  
(1850-1894), *British writer,*  
*essayist, poet, novelist,*  
*“Treasure Island”*

*This book is dedicated  
to my beautiful wife Meri  
who was called up by God  
June 21, 2002.  
She was the sounding board  
for numerous poems  
and the inspiration for  
many as well.*



## **Forward**

As an avid outdoorsman, Bob Welsh has enjoyed a lifetime of hiking, hunting, camping and of course, storytelling. In fact, he has enchanted lucky audiences around campfires in the U.S. and Canada for more than forty years. Now, happily, it's your turn.

Drawing from a lifetime of experiences that include a tour of duty in the U.S. Navy and 29 years as an Ohio State Trooper, Bob weaves both fiction and fact into his memorable poems. Always with an eye to exploring new territory, his imagination ranges from the spit 'n polish military to shaggy mountain man, from the shimmer of dry plains heat to the Antarctic's frozen grip, from sudden miracles to a simple song.

Always engaging—with a natural style that by turns jabs your funny bone and grabs your heart—Bob Welsh is one voice you will always remember, especially when you're sitting around a campfire and someone asks, "Know any good stories?"

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## Don't Judge

Don't judge a man by age or voice  
Or clothes that he may wear  
He might be blest with talent that  
Is far beyond compare

The year was eighteen ninety-five  
A mid October day  
The folks had come from miles to see  
The man called Clint McKay

The best crack shot in all the land  
He'd thrill you to the core  
He shot a lever action gun  
Winchester ninety-four

He'd never miss, shot from the hip  
And then behind his back  
The folks would cheer most every time  
That rifle gun would crack

The pennies thrown up in the air  
Would vanish from the sky  
And often two or three at once  
He had a deadly eye

His four year old was Molly Ann  
She nearly stole the day  
With apples thrown into the air  
For Clint to blow away

An apple gripped in both her hands  
Then bending to the ground  
She'd throw it up then hold her head  
In case it came back down

Each time her hands went o're her head  
The crowd let out a roar  
The apple then would blow apart  
Its stem and seed and core

Now Clint McKay could shoot for hours  
Reloading on the run  
Amazing folks at how he shot  
That lever action gun

A slight degree of arrogance  
Was there for all to see  
It mutely said that no one else  
Can shoot as good as me

And then he told the waiting crowd  
I'd like to make a bet  
Here's fifty bucks to outshoot me  
Ain't no one done it yet

But everyone he dared to try  
Backed up or told him no  
And then he saw a gray old man  
Who held a wooden bow

A quiver draped across his back  
'Twas made of cougar hide  
A dozen shafts with turkey fletch  
Slid neatly down inside

He looked to be least sixty-five  
His hat was beaver pelt  
A mountain man in buckskin shirt  
A hand ax in his belt

Just passing through to get supplies  
Then head back all alone  
To hunt and trap the Bighorn range  
Above the Yellowstone

“Well lookie here” cried Clint McKay  
Intent to have some fun  
“Pops has a bow, I’ll bet his mom  
Won’t let him have a gun.”

The old man grinned, without resent  
Then slowly turned to go  
But Clint said, “Wait, the folks would love  
To see you shoot that bow.”

“I’ll throw my hat up in the air  
And you can have a try  
Just load ‘er up then pull ‘er back  
And let an arrow fly.”

The old man snugged his quiver tight  
Across his collar bone  
And then he spoke, his voice was calm  
A low and rugged tone

“Don’t like to shoot to entertain  
Just thought you oughta know  
But in a fix I’ll trust my life  
To this ol’ wooden bow.”

“I’m sure you would,” said Clint McKay  
“But tell you what to do  
One arrow launched up in the air  
I’ll shoot it right in two.”

The old man gave a little nod  
Clint’s rifle gun was cocked  
One silent move with speed and grace  
An arrow’s out and nocked

A smooth release and toward the sky  
That wooden arrow flew  
The rifle cracked, a puff of smoke  
The arrow snapped in two

The crowd let out another cheer  
Applause was long and loud  
The old man seemed to drift away  
Into the yelling crowd

Clint doffed his hat, the show was done  
The folks began to part  
When suddenly he caught a sight  
That nearly stopped his heart

His Molly Ann napped on the ground  
And just began to wake  
And there it lay, well camouflaged  
A deadly rattlesnake

Embraced with fear and terror that  
He'd never felt before  
He fumbled with a box of shells  
And model ninety-four

The snake slid out from 'neath a log  
And reared its ugly head  
While Molly Ann began to stir  
Upon her earthen bed

A man who'd bragged how good he was  
While loading on the run  
Was shaking so and dropping shells  
He couldn't load his gun

Clint saw the snake flick out its tongue  
He dropped another round  
Its tail began to vibrate  
It made a buzzing sound

The little girl let out a scream  
'Twas way too late to run  
While daddy fumbled helplessly  
And tried to load his gun

The snake struck out with lightning speed  
Its mouth was opened wide  
And needle fangs were now exposed  
The crowd was terrified

It seemed like time had gone to sleep  
Then woke up with a thump  
An arrow struck the rattler's head  
And pinned it to a stump

Its body wrapped around the shaft  
The snake was dying slow  
While in the crowd a gray old man  
Was lowering his bow

He reached and snugged his quiver tight  
Across his collar bone  
And then he spoke, his voice was calm  
That low and rugged tone

“Don’t like to shoot to entertain.  
I think I told you so  
But in a fix I’ll trust my life  
To this ol’ wooden bow.”

Don’t judge a man by age or voice  
Or clothes that he may wear  
He might be blest with talent that  
Is far beyond compare



## Principles

The world is full of spineless folk  
They clutter up the land  
They’ve not the nerve to speak the truth  
Or guts to take a stand

Now I for one will speak my mind  
I’ll never walk the fence  
You’ll hear me preach what I believe  
With solid confidence

A case in point is alcohol  
Those wimps just drift along  
And fail to take a righteous stand  
Is drinkin’ right or wrong?

If when you speak of alcohol  
You mean the devil’s brew  
The poison scourge that wrecks your life  
And leaves your brain eschew

That ugly beast that lures you in  
Then holds you in its spell  
The rich the poor the young the old  
Are all its clientele

Yes, when you speak of alcohol  
If it’s that liquid sin  
The beer the wine the rye the scotch  
The whiskey and the gin