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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.



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STORYTELLING

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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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“**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