

Humboldt Heartland

Family ranching persists in far Northern California.

Photos © Andy Westfall.

These photographs are from the book, “Humboldt Heartland,” written and photographed by rancher and fifth-generation Humboldt County, Calif., resident, Andy Westfall. Through images and the voices of the ranchers themselves, the book documents the past, present and future of ranching on the remote North Coast. It portrays the rugged beauty, the hard work and the humor, and the challenges and

opportunities that lay ahead for these ranches and ranching families. Fourteen years in the making, Westfall described it as “my honor, my pleasure, and also my responsibility, to tell this story accurately and appropriately.” Although locally based, there are themes common to ranching throughout the West.

You can visit Andy’s website for more information: www.humboldtheartland.com.



Lane Ridge barn, Janes’ Place Ranch, Redwood Creek.



Charles Larsen, 1907-2009, Ferndale. "I used to do a lot of horsebackin'. I'd go over on the mountain—I'd be in the same place for a week at a time...that's the trouble with these guys now days—they've never made enough horse tracks."

Don Jaunarena with Bett and Sass. Don's father came from Spain in 1912 when he was 16.

In 1929, a big fire went through Bear River. "The fire was devastating to my dad. He had gone somewhere to help fight the fire and when he came back that night, the house was gone. His two dogs were burned up in the fire. Just before he passed away, he said he cried like a baby when he came home and found those dogs. They meant that much to him."





Chris Coleman moving cattle, Dublin Heights.

Ocean House Ranch, Cape Mendocino. This used to be a sheep outfit owned by the Russ Company started by Joe Russ IV's great-grandfather. Joe says, "We lambed at Ocean House down on the flat. I remember once we were bid 16 cents for our lambs and Dad figured they were worth more so we loaded 1,100 lambs on a truck and shipped them to Los Angeles. When it was all said and done, he made maybe a cent a pound more, but it was a matter of principle."





Merrill and Liz Ford, Ford Ranch, Liscom Hill.

Passing on to the next generation is the toughest decision that ranch families have to make. This is the writer's son Graham Westfall and grandsons Henry and Jack, Oil Creek Ranch, Bunker Hill.

