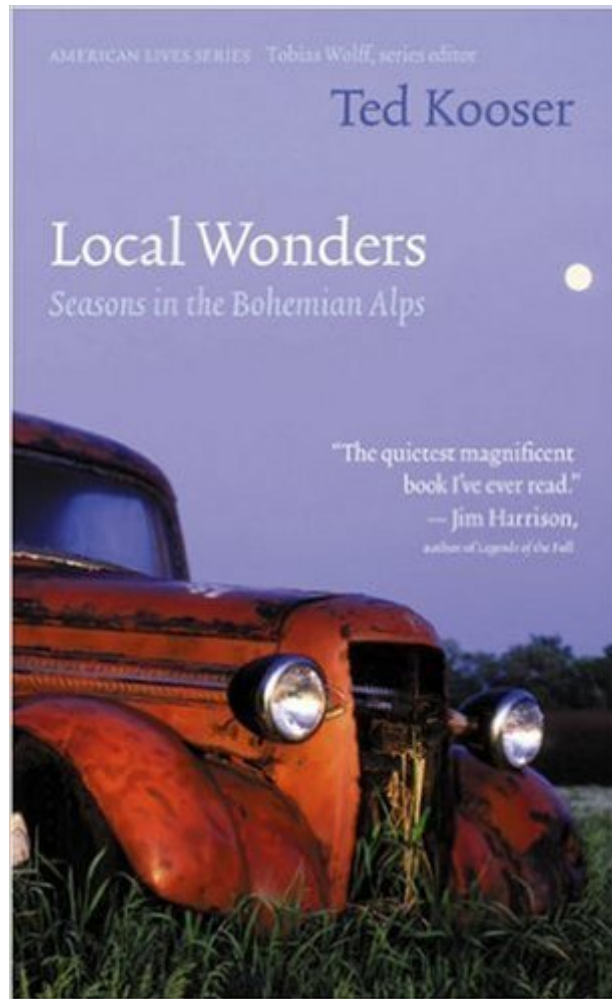


The book was found

Local Wonders: Seasons In The Bohemian Alps (American Lives)



Synopsis

Ted Kooser describes with exquisite detail and humor the place he calls home in the rolling hills of southeastern Nebraska—a area known as the Bohemian Alps. Nothing is too big or too small for his attention. Memories of his grandmother's cooking are juxtaposed with reflections about the old-fashioned outhouse on his property. When casting his eye on social progress, Kooser reminds us that the closing of local schools, thoughtless county weed control, and irresponsible housing development destroy more than just the view. In the end, what makes life meaningful for Kooser are the ways in which his neighbors care for one another and how an afternoon walking with an old dog, or baking a pie, or decorating the house for Christmas can summon memories of his Iowa childhood. This writer is a seer in the truest sense of the word, discovering the extraordinary within the ordinary, the deep beneath the shallow, the abiding wisdom in the pithy Bohemian proverbs that are woven into his essays.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Poet (and now Poet Laureate) Ted Kooser wrote this collection of prose pieces while in his early sixties, all of them appreciations of his daily life and memories of family going back to his boyhood in Ames, Iowa. Living today in a farmhouse near little Gardner, Nebraska, not far from Lincoln, he first describes the rolling terrain of the land and its Czech and Bohemian settlers, whose descendants continue to provide a cultural identity to the region. The essays are sprinkled with Czech and Bohemian proverbs, reflecting the wry common-sense wisdom of the Old World that informs his

point of view. Not all of them essays, some are short prose poems, spun out usually in one or two long sentences that reach a breathless climax that is, well, breathtaking. Reading his work, you are struck by his sincerity and the intensity of his awareness. While a man of strong opinions, they are rarely expressed directly and only seldom ironically, as when he describes the willful spraying of herbicides in road ditches by two county workers who have no sense of the risks to their health and the environment. Identified on the book jacket as a retired insurance executive, Kooser embodies a kind of risk aversion that celebrates what is steady, dependable, and unthreatening in his world. There are rarely shadows, and when they do appear it is with a surprise that is shocking, as when a woman tells of an elderly aunt whose family was murdered by a farm hand when she was a teenager. Even his bout with cancer is told with a kind of emotional reserve and matter-of-factness that belies the anxiety he experienced over a six-month period of recovery.

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