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Bull Canyon: A Boatbuilder, a Writer, and Other Wildlife

Lin Pardey
Paradise Cay Publications (April 2011)
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In 1980, after eleven years of sailing around the world, Lin Pardey and her boatbuilder husband, Larry, needed time-out from the life aquatic. The couple settled in Bull Canyon, California, a rural locale that featured open spaces and wildlife galore—but no electricity or phone service. For four years, Larry and Lin stayed in one place. Lin Pardey's memoir of that time offers a straightforward, bittersweet account of two seafaring soul mates adjusting to life on land.

The reasons for choosing the barely-there community, located sixty miles southeast of Los Angeles, are basic. Thanks to their landlord friends, the Pardeys pay no rent for their stone cabin. There is ample space for Larry to build a boat that when completed would take the couple on another nautical sojourn. Lin, meanwhile, can focus on her blossoming writing career, which includes working on a book and regular articles for sailing magazines.

Though *Bull Canyon* isn't as exotic as the couple's books about sailing on their beloved cutter *Seraffyn*, land life provides its own set of challenges. Lin and Larry have to adjust to a world surrounded by others—nosy neighbors, wave upon wave of rodents, and impromptu visits from fans, friends, and family. This is not ideal for two people whose work relies on uninterrupted concentration.

As Larry's boat nears completion and the Pardeys' stint as landlubbers winds down, Bull Canyon's bucolic quaintness evaporates. The state builds a freeway nearby, which gets real estate developers interested. In between writing assignments and errands, Lin spurs a movement for her rustic neighborhood to finally get electricity and phone service. Jealousy and bitterness increase among the residents. The one challenge the Pardeys can't meet is the unanticipated ravages of time.

The "primitive yet peaceful" marvels and "special intimacy" that Lin once adored become inconveniences. After the utilities arrived, "this intimacy, along with the camaraderie of the canyon folks seemed to disappear," she writes. "… I realized many of the original charms of canyon life were now just a nuisance."

Though Lin Pardey occasionally goes overboard, detailing everything from maternal yearnings to the muddy chaos provided by an interminable rainy stretch, she remains a forthright and authentic narrator. And she learned an invaluable lesson: In taking their own rugged approach at domesticity, Larry and Lin Pardey discovered that the sea was where they always belonged.

PETE CROATTO (June 20, 2011)

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