FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Nature

Excellent Joy: Fishing, Farming, Hunting, and Psychology
Michael R. Rosmann
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Michael R. Rosmann proves to be a unique breed of American in *Excellent Joy: Fishing Farming, Hunting, and Psychology*. A clinical psychologist serving rural farm communities near the Rosmann family homestead in Western Iowa, the author invites readers into his varied world of fishing and hunting trips and helping cattle give birth on his farm. Abundantly clear is the author's compassion for the mental health of the farmers who are bonded first and foremost to their land.

Arranged in small chapters that read like well-organized journal entries, the book is without attempts to dazzle the reader with unbelievable hunting victories or tall tales nostalgically recounted, although there is plenty of entertainment. Instead, its beauty lies in humble and straightforward storytelling. In one chapter, the reader is instructed in how to tie "the little black fly" for fly fishing. In another, we accompany the author himself on a wild goose chase (and his resulting heart attack). About his family traditions during the holidays, Rosmann says, "Christmas morning stirs in me a special affection for my cattle and prompts me to drop extra shovels of sweet corn and layers of aromatic alfalfa bales into the bunks of the powerful herd bulls and gentle cows." With the author's receptive attitude towards the work and play of farmers and fisherman, it seems appropriate to learn that cows, too, have a reason to enjoy Christmas morning.

In many ways, this book is representative of one important facet of American society that is easily forgotten by the country's increasing urbanization. Presented here is a society that values self-sufficiency, careful management of the land and its abundance (both wild and cultivated), a quiet religion that undergirds a worldview (Rosmann is German Catholic), and a direct relationship with nature that embeds humans as part of the ecosystem. Make no mistake: this is no tree hugger's lament. It is a great portrait of how people live off the land, and a snapshot of the roots of the Amerian spirit, which often involved the simple joy of catching a

fish to eat for dinner. As Rosmann recalls, “The beer-battered walleye tasted just the way they should. In fact all of life was the way it should be at the moment—a slice of American Pie!”

Gabriela Worrell