

Finding Abbey: The Search of Edward Abbey and His Hidden Desert Grave

Sean Prentiss

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Finding Abbey intertwines both biography and memoir, and Prentiss does an admirable job of giving equal consideration to both.

In *Finding Abbey: The Search For Edward Abbey and His Desert Grave*, Sean Prentiss retraces his search to find the grave of renowned environmental writer Edward Abbey. Along the way, Prentiss learns valuable and insightful lessons about life, a sense of belonging, and the value of strong relationships.

When Abbey died in 1989, four of his closest friends buried him in a secret desert location. Prentiss used clues he had gathered to narrow down the possible spot and set out to find it. Beginning at Abbey's birthplace in Pennsylvania, he visited areas throughout the West, territory beloved by Abbey and where he had lived and gained inspiration for his writings.

Prentiss's intensive research included interviewing local residents, scouring maps of desert regions, meeting individually with the four men who buried Abbey, and hiking some of the same paths Abbey had traveled years earlier. The quest, however, proved to be as much a personal revelation about his own life as it was a mission to understand a man's death. "Being almost forty, somewhere near middle life and living a city life I don't understand, this search for Abbey may help me unravel the mystery of who I am and how to live this one precious life." Particularly fascinating is watching Prentiss's original obsession with finding Abbey's grave transform into an introspective analysis of his own motivations and desires.

Prentiss excels at providing an intriguing and entertaining account of the evolution and diversity of Abbey's writings and how they influenced many environmental issues. His portrayal of Abbey is well-rounded, addressing his shortcomings as well as his positive characteristics.

Prentiss successfully demonstrates his ability to write an intriguing and compelling story that simultaneously informs, inspires, and entertains. His vivid imagery and unique interviewing style adds depth and passion to his search, resulting in an exceptional narrative that flows smoothly and conveys his admiration for Abbey and the American West. *Finding Abbey* is a journey well worth taking.

JEFF FRIEND (Summer 2015)

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