FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

One Man's Wilderness: An Alaskan Odyssey
Sam Keith
Alaska Northwest Books
978-0-88240-513-1
(May 31, 2003)

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach,” wrote Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond. For Richard Proenneke the same desire was so strong it prompted the fifty-year-old heavy equipment operator and repairman to retire early and go off to the woods.

Sometimes it is difficult for a person to know their strengths and weaknesses while living among others; one way to discover them is to live alone. Of course, most people will never venture far from the comforts of home, but Proenneke felt the call of the wild and lived the second part
of his life in Alaska.

One Man’s Wilderness, written by Sam Keith from the journals of Proenneke, is a re-released classic that first captivated readers twenty-six years ago. First published in 1973, the book chronicles Proenneke’s experiences during the first sixteen months (May, 1968 to September, 1969) of his odyssey.

Proenneke arrived in South Central Alaska with only hand tools and a desire to create a beautiful and simple life. The book outlines each
facet of his adventure from choosing the site for his homestead, to basking in the glory of what one man can create. The many wonderful photographs document the one-room 165 square foot cabin’s construction and the spectacular view overlooking pristine Twin Lakes—170 miles Southwest of Anchorage.

Keith and Proenneke were coworkers on Kodiak Island and formed a friendship that lasted for decades. After many years of teaching, Keith spent two weeks with Proenneke in his Alaskan paradise and then wrote this book.

Keith’s writing is clear and descriptive; one can sense each strike of the ax and draw of the knife. The reader feels he is experiencing the adventure as well. The journal descriptions of the Alaskan wilderness flow from the page to the reader.

Proenneke celebrated the thirtith anniversary of his adventure by returning to his cabin in

1998 and relinquishing his homestead to the National Park Service. Now in his eighties, he no longer lives the solitary wilderness life, but still considers himself the guardian of Twin Lakes country.

This outdoor classic resurrects the grandeur of the simple life and Thoreau's words: "if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

Readers who are interested in detailed information on cabin building, or just want to dream about living in a place far beyond home, will enjoy this book.

Alan L. White