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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Tight Lines: Observations of an Outdoor Philosopher
Don Moyer
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Four Stars (out of Five)

These days, leisure time for most people often means several hours in front of a screen, whether it's a TV or a computer. An outdoors experience might mean a walk to the nearest ice cream parlor, or an hour on the deck chatting with friends. At the same time, our meat comes most often from the freezer at the grocery store, and wildlife sightings may be limited to the neighbor's cat.

Don Moyer, columnist and lifelong outdoors enthusiast, has some suggestions and stories to share with people who are looking for a more authentic wilderness experience. A fisherman since before he can remember, Moyer knows the best fishing holes in his corner of California (and other places around the country), and he has lots of opinions on the best way to catch trout, bass, crappies and any other kind of fish that might strike your fancy.

Fish aren't the only species about which he has a vast amount of knowledge. He can offer tips on bear, deer, and rattlesnake hunting, and has lots of experience catching animals in his Havahart trap. He can teach you how to tie a fly; he understands the magic of a hot spring; he can pontificate on the benefits of catch and release practices; and he knows a few terrific ski lodges where the fishing is top notch. Want to learn how to hunt in order to fill the freezer with fresh meat? Moyer is the man to go to. If he can't help, he'll know someone who can.

Moyer's cozy tone makes *Tight Lines*, his collection of columns dating from 2010 back to the early 1980s, very readable. His obvious knowledge and willingness to share make his book a terrific addition to the library of anyone with an interest in the outdoors.

Some of the earlier articles included here feel too specific to his own local geography, such as the ones centered around the Tuolumne River and the conservation efforts toward keeping the river useful for all inhabitants. Moyer doesn't quite project this twenty-seven-year-old effort onto the more global screen, and readers unfamiliar with the place may not react with interest or understand what it has to do with the larger ecological picture.

However, Moyer shines when he writes about his own family's rich history spent

outdoors and the various traditions that have passed down through the generations. For example, he describes the decorated gift boxes that Moyer and his dad exchanged year after year: “We both knew what the box contained, but somehow that wasn’t the point. Our dumb fishing Christmas boxes had become a tradition more important than any physical gift could ever be.”

Whether he’s instructing readers on which kind of gun to buy, directing them to the best ghost town, or encouraging them to slow down and keep their eyes open to the beauty of the natural world, Moyer writes with humor, a cozy tone, and a true outdoorsman’s heart.

Andi Diehn