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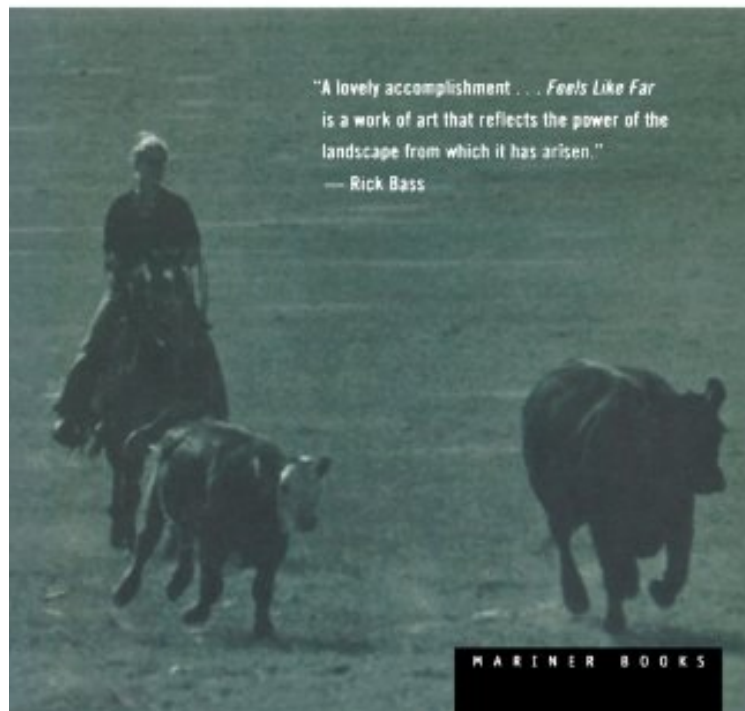
## Feels Like Far: A Rancher's Life on the Great Plains

*Linda M. Hasselstrom*

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# Feels Like Far

A RANCHER'S LIFE ON THE GREAT PLAINS  
LINDA HASSELSTROM



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**Linda M. Hasselstrom : Feels Like Far: A Rancher's Life on the Great Plains** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Feels Like Far: A Rancher's Life on the Great Plains:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Feels like she couldn't choose - ranching or writing By Timothy J.

BazzettI've had this book, FEELS LIKE FAR, on my shelf for nearly two years now, bought along with some other books about the modern American west. At the time I'd been reading some Montana memoirs by Mary Clearman Blew and Annick Smith which I enjoyed tremendously. Unfortunately, I didn't like this one nearly as much. I'm not sure why, because the writing itself is certainly very good. Perhaps it's because Hasselstrom seems stuck in her obsessing about the thorny relationship she had with her adoptive father for the last couple decades. The particular thorn in this case was her father's belief that women didn't need all the education that his daughter had sought and earned; that their rightful place was as a dutiful and unquestioning good ranch wife as Linda's mother had obviously been. The author herself was torn between her love of the land - the South Dakota ranch where she'd grown up - and her love of books and writing. And therein lies her perpetual dilemma, which she beats practically to death in this memoir. I liked the parts in which she talked more about her personal life - her childhood and her two marriages. She had no children, only stepchildren, which may possibly be why she continues to obsess over her difficult relationship with her parents, even as she nears fifty. What she does write about her parents' failing health, both physical and mental, is easy to relate to and quite affecting. But it gets quite literally done to death here, and I began to wish she'd just get over it. Her descriptions of the nighthawk flights and near mystical encounters with buffalo and elk are excellent, as are her memories of her close friend, Margaret, who becomes an early AIDS victim after receiving tainted blood transfusions following a horrific auto accident. I liked this book and I didn't, depending on which part I was reading. It seemed uneven in that respect, flashes of brilliantly beautiful writing, followed by long stretches of near poetic musing which became tiresome. Maybe this is more a book for women. I didn't feel that way about Blew's ALL BUT THE WALTZ and BALSAMROOT or Smith's HOMESTEAD, which had steady narratives that carried you effortlessly forward. This one simply didn't work as well for me. In the end I was just glad to finish it. - Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir BOOKLOVER

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. MemorableBy Diane J. PetersThis is a memoir that really stays with you. It's been several years since I read this book (on loan), and I've wanted to share it with others. When my mom came to live with me, I knew she'd love it too, and ordered the copy. It's a great read. The author has a great narrative voice and a life that is extraordinary to most of us, who'll never have an opportunity to experience anything like it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Feels Like FarBy LLDThis book gives a nice overview of living on the plains of western South Dakota. The author shares insights into her life growing up on a ranch and then later moving to Wyoming. Most interesting is the evolving relationship with her father as he ages and becomes not only more dependent on his daughter but is also becoming more cantankerous. The stresses in her life are real and something we can all identify with at some point in all lives. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and intend to read more of her books.

In Feels Like Far, award-winning author Linda Hasselstrom paints an intimate portrait of family, love, work, nature, and survival against the backdrop of the far-flung South Dakota prairie. Sixteen linked stories tell of the joy of training a first horse, the heartbreak of finding a fatally injured cow, the beauty of cavorting nighthawks, the stubbornness of her father, a rigid old rancher who bucks at old age, the deep, almost spiritual bond she shares with a friend who is diagnosed with AIDS. In deliciously direct and unsentimental style (Kathleen Norris), Hasselstrom maps the landscape of her life, demarcating the same beauties and brutalities that intermingle on the Great Plains she calls home.

From Publishers WeeklyThe brutality and beauty of South Dakota ranch life suffuse this articulate memoir by award-winning western author Hasselstrom (Windbreak). Her difficult relationship with her stepfather, John, who adopted her in 1952 when she was nine, runs through the short pieces collected here. While her mother actively disliked ranching, Hasselstrom found it "like slipping my foot in a perfectly fitting soft boot." An eager pupil, she strove to please John, who taught her to ride, shoot, brand and castrate cattle; one day she even had to kill a sick steer. Strong and silent, John doled out large doses of tough love to his stepdaughter, once telling her that if she got into trouble at school, he would double her punishment. When she became a published writer, he refused to read her work and belittled all activities aside from ranching. Hasselstrom eventually returned to live and write on the ranch with her second husband, who died from cancer. Shortly after this loss, a close female friend revealed to Hasselstrom that she had been diagnosed with AIDS. At the same time, John's physical and mental health began to deteriorate. The author's stoicism in the face of these events began to crack after John ordered her to stop writing and work for him as a paid ranch laborer. Hasselstrom fled to Cheyenne, Wyo., where she found freedom but sorely missed her hardscrabble life. After John's death, Hasselstrom returned to the ranch to look after her mother and to reconnect with the landscape that has shaped her life. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library JournalThe city mouse/country mouse scenario is played out before the reader's eyes in this collection of essays by award-winning author Hasselstrom (Windbreak). Transported as a girl from Rapid City, SD, to a ranch on the broad Western plain of Dakota Territory when her mother remarried, Hasselstrom became enraptured with her new lifestyle and her adoptive father's willingness to have her help him on the ranch. The essays follow Hasselstrom's growth into adulthood, as she struggles with her love of the hard work, the culture of male leadership, and change in herself and her relationships. Brief stints as a writer in the city allow her to draw contrasts with life on the Great Plains. With finely descriptive

language, Hasselstrom brings the reader to the Dakota ranch to visualize its vastness and beauty, all the while reinforcing the personal dedication of the family that lives so closely to the land. Recommended for secondary schools and public and academic libraries. A Joyce Sparrow, Oldsmar Lib., St. Petersburg, FL Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA soulful memoir of prairie life. Name the heartbreak, and Linda Hasselstrom (*Leaning Into The Wind*, 1997, etc.) has faced it. Early on, her father, a taciturn and practical-minded Wyoming rancher, ordered her either to abandon her writing and take a \$300-a-month job as a ranch hand, or get off the family spread and try her luck in the big city. Hasselstrom took the latter course, relocating to the prairie metropolis of Cheyenne and, as it turned out, eventually producing a distinguished body of essays and poems. In this memoir, Hasselstrom revisits her life on the ranch, a hard and unforgiving place where issues of life and death are never far away. In one chapter, she writes, for instance, of her pride at receiving a fine .22 rifle as a gift on her twelfth birthday, a gift that immediately had to be put to use against a sick steer and a family of barn-invading raccoons. One by one, they put their paws over their eyes, she writes. I groaned, but I shot them anyway. The epiphanies come fast and furious, as Hasselstrom faces the death of her second husband to cancer and the loss of her father, who, she discovers, had kept a memoir of his own, an archive apparently fated to have only one readerhis daughter. Having inherited the ranch from which she had been exiled, she closes her book by pondering whether she has any moral right to the land, inasmuch as she will have no children, has no intention of working the ranch, and has no real connection to it, for everyone who ties me to this place is subsiding into the land. Hasselstrom is a careful writer who reveals just enough of herself without falling into sentimentality, and her book is a healthy corrective for anyone who imagines that theres anything romantic about the cowboy way of life. -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.