

BOOK REVIEW

Wrangling Women: Humor and Gender in the American West. By Kristin M. McAndrews. University of Nevada Press, Reno and Las Vegas. 200 p. \$34.95 ISBN 0-87417-693-2.

Wrangling Women describes the ways in which some women who work with horses in the Methow Valley of eastern Washington use humor in their storytelling, and what this humor reveals about issues of gender in the American West. Winthrop, Washington, a small mountain community, is a western theme town. A group of women who work as ranchers, trail guides, horse trainers, and packers find themselves in a contradictory environment where they have to preserve gender stereotypes in the tourism-based economy and still assume authority and expertise the same as their male counterparts.

McAndrews writes from her study of how these “wrangling women” accomplish this balancing act of women’s subversion and manipulation of humor, language, and gender stereotypes. The author states that she “began to suspect that the reason there was so little scholarship on women’s humor was that male researchers didn’t understand it, or perhaps they didn’t recognize it.” (p. 4). McAndrews conducted interviews with Winthrop’s female wranglers, collecting stories about their lives as workers and as members of the community. Professional success depends on courage, ingenuity, and a sense of humor. They also have to work within the town’s Wild West image. McAndrews examines how these women use humor in their storytelling and in their work.

Several of the women interviewed by McAndrews were quite interesting. At one time Babe Montgomery ran a packhorse business in Winthrop and was caretaker at Sun Mountain Lodge. She also managed a hotel in Tacoma, Washington. She had a talent with horses, teaching her father’s plow horse to do tricks when she was young. She was a jockey and a trainer of racehorses. During the summer and fall Marva Mountjoy cooks for a variety of packers. Packing into the wilderness is one of her favorite things to do. Lynn Breaky-Clark teaches half-time at a school in Twisp, Washington. In the summer she packs into the wilderness with a variety of outfitters. During the winter she cooks for sleigh rides at Sun Mountain Lodge.

The women interviewed by McAndrews demonstrate that while traditional gender stereotyping occurs, they have found nonthreatening ways to achieve professional and personal objectives in their work. *Wrangling Women* is a commentary on the way women use humor in their storytelling and in their working relationships in the American West. *Wrangling Women* is an interesting book to read.

Jan Wiedemann, College Station, TX, Texas Section Society for Range Management. ♦

