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Donald McCaig

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Donald McCaig : An American Homeplace before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An American Homeplace:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. An Entertaining and Thought Provoking Collection By Fran The word "essay" evokes thoughts of the dry historical documents that were required reading in school. That is not what Donald McCaig has written here. This book is an interesting collection of true short stories. The first chapter follows the history of the Virginia farm that McCaig and his wife purchased in 1971 and the beginning of their life there. The subsequent chapters describe the rural lifestyle of the McCaigs and their neighbors. There are stories of pleasure and of pain; stories of the hard labor and the simple rewards of farming. There are stories of humans and of animals. The chapter "The Best Four Days in Highland County", a narrative of a Virginia county fair, is the essence of the book, combining all of the elements that make the book, and the lifestyle, so appealing. Because each chapter can stand on its own, the reader can read or re-read each of them individually, and these are tales that deserve to be re-read and savored. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent and interesting story of the joys and miseries of ... By CO_Mike Excellent and interesting story of the joys and miseries of owning a small farm and the complex relationship between people and working dogs. If you're interested in homesteading or stock dogs, this is a great book to read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By border mom wonderful story teller

A National Public Radio commentator on rural life in America comments on his own lifestyle and the nature of rural

democracy as he describes the experiences he and his wife have had since they bought an unworked farm in western Virginia. 15,000 first printing.

From Publishers Weekly In 1971 McCaig (*Nop's Trials*) and his wife left New York City for an abandoned farm in sparsely populated southwestern Virginia. Here he offers an engaging account of his tenure there in an atmosphere not far removed from that of a century ago, as he traces the land's history through its previous owners and mourns the passing of the family farm. Affectionately describing his working dogs, farm animals and wildlife, he gives the grim details of putting down more than 100 diseased sheep at one time. He tells about the local volunteer fire department, explains his duties as precinct captain on Election Day (68 voters) and takes us to the county fair, "the best four days in Highland County." Seeking encouragement in farming, McCaig turns to some notable writerly land stewards--Helen Nearing, Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson and Maury Telleen. Readers who enjoy Noel Perrin's works will applaud this book too. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This collection of writings by the author of *Nop's Trials* (LJ 4/1/84) is based on McCaig's personal experiences on his Williamsville, Virginia mountain valley farm. McCaig first provides a brief history of the area, from the time it was explored and settled in the 1700s until he and his wife Anne purchased their farm in 1971. The main portion of his book consists of an assortment of short essays or stories, some previously published, about farming, raising sheep, working with sheep dogs, dealing with neighbors, and day-to-day life in a rural community. McCaig concludes with brief sketches of a few contemporary "land stewards": Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, Helen Nearing, and Maury Telleen, all of whom he has met and obviously admires. McCaig is a good storyteller. His concern for rural America and small family farms is present throughout this entertaining, thoughtful, and often philosophical volume. Heartily recommended for all public and academic libraries.-William H. Wiese, Kansas State Univ. Libs., Manhattan Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sEssays on rural life by NPR commentator McCaig (*Eminent Dogs, Dangerous Men*, 1991; *Nop's Trials*, 1984, etc.). McCaig's historical piece about the remote Virginia region where he lives and why he gave up Manhattan is unfocused and gets the book off to an uncertain start. Nor do the two-page essays, written for radio, and the longer essays, created for publications such as *The Atlantic*, contribute to a unified whole. Read individually, however, McCaig's pieces are lyrical and timely. The joys of country life come through in meditations on being snowbound, when one can read in peace and savor the food one has laid by. Farm animals provide satisfaction: the pleasures of working stock with dogs, or the nearly human frailties of sheep. But McCaig has doubts about the life he and his wife have carved out: City friends are far more prosperous, and everywhere he looks rural communities are failing. There are fewer farmers; every old method, which took from the land but also preserved it, is being subsumed by the assembly-line style of agribusiness. In his concluding essays, McCaig seeks out several visionaries, asking, in effect, "Can we save rural America?" Helen Nearing and the now-deceased Scott Nearing were the famous radicals of the 1950's who, with *Living the Good Life* and its sequels, inspired "back-to-the-land"--but McCaig feels the movement has died. Wendell Berry, while an admirable philosopher and poet, also seems anachronistic. The nearest thing to hope comes in Kansas, from Wes Jackson, with his elaborate experiments with the right crops for the right regions. McCaig brings a kind of loving humility to his subjects, a rare quality. His collection is uneven, but, at its best, pure and moving. (Twenty halftones--not seen.) -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.