



Book Review: All Roads Lead to Manyberries

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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If you've every sat in a small-town bar and discussed politics, you will enjoy this book.

Manyberries is a farming community in southern Alberta with a population of nearly one hundred residents. The six main characters of the book have built relationships with each other through their daily loyalty to the "happy hour" at the "Just One More Saloon" in their town. Each day, except Sunday when the establishment is closed, the five men meet to discuss news events and share the alcoholic beverages that are dispensed by Hazel who is the inn's owner/operator. The rule is that the person who arrives first gets to choose the topic to be discussed.

The "happy hour" generally runs far longer than an hour. In fact, there is an underlying message in the narrative that implies that opening time to closing time is not an unusual timeframe for the dialogue and drinking that these characters share.

Ron Wood, who is the author of this and the forerunner "And God Created Manyberries" uses his experience as a journalist, anchorman and communications bureaucrat to capture the reader's attention. The dialogue that his characters exchange is filled with disgust for government, desire to improve their community through economic development and some (a little) common sense. Mixed in with the issues, is a very down-to-earth caring that the Manyberries drinkers obviously have for each other. They know each other well enough to sprinkle their conversations with humour about the idiosyncrasies that each has adopted.

There were times that I was very thankful to be of an age that had lived through many of the Canadian political situations that were referred to as I was able to fully understand the sarcasm used and the reason for it. I also laughed out loud at everyday situations that anyone would be able to understand and enjoy. For example, the planning session that these men conducted in which they would be able to quit working merely by accessing paternity and maternity benefits was wacky and hilarious.

The chapters in the book are short and each could,, in its own way, be a short story. Together, however, they are tied together by the way that the lives of the characters interact and support each other.