



Lasso the Wind: Away to the New West

By Timothy Egan

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A *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year

Winner of the Mountains and Plains Book Seller's Association Award

"Sprawling in scope. . . . Mr. Egan uses the past powerfully to explain and give dimension to the present." --*The New York Times*

"Fine reportage . . . honed and polished until it reads more like literature than journalism." --*Los Angeles Times*

"They have tried to tame it, shave it, fence it, cut it, dam it, drain it, nuke it, poison it, pave it, and subdivide it," writes Timothy Egan of the West; still, "this region's hold on the American character has never seemed stronger." In this colorful and revealing journey through the eleven states west of the 100th meridian, Egan, a third-generation westerner, evokes a lovely and troubled country where land is religion and the holy war between preservers and possessors never ends.

Egan leads us on an unconventional, freewheeling tour: from America's oldest continuously inhabited community, the Ancoma Pueblo in New Mexico, to the high kitsch of Lake Havasu City, Arizona, where London Bridge has been painstakingly rebuilt stone by stone; from the fragile beauty of Idaho's Bitterroot Range to the gross excess of Las Vegas, a city built as though in defiance of its arid environment. In a unique blend of travel writing, historical reflection, and passionate polemic, Egan has produced a moving study of the West: how it became what it is, and where it is going.

"The writing is simply wonderful. From the opening paragraph, Egan seduces the reader. . . . Entertaining, thought provoking."

--*The Arizona Daily Star Weekly*

"A western breeziness and love of open spaces shines through **Lasso the Wind**. . . . The writing is simple and evocative."

--*The Economist*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The American West has always been as much a symbol as a location; as much a myth as a destination. "If land and religion are what people most often kill each other over," writes Timothy Egan, "then the West is different only in that the land is the religion. As such, the basic struggle is between the West of possibility and the West of possession." This struggle for possession is a recurring theme in *Lasso the Wind*, involving individuals such as Kit Laney, the "Last Cowboy in America," who defiantly refuses to pay for grazing rights on public land; Patricia Mulroy, the head of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, who works to bring more water to Las Vegas' casinos, golf courses, and subdivisions, even if it means damming the Virgin River running through Zion National Park in Utah; and Robert P. McCulloch, a zealous developer who reassembled each stone of the London Bridge in the Arizona desert in an attempt to draw people to his contrived dream town. These 14 enlightening and entertaining essays are the result of Egan's tour of the 11 states "on the sunset side of the 100th meridian," which led him from remote villages without road access to sprawling suburbs carved out of parched earth and desert rock in an attempt to see how the history of the West--binding myths and all--has left its imprint on the West's present condition.

The Pacific Northwest correspondent for the *New York Times* and a first-rate storyteller, Egan writes with humor and a gimlet eye, proving himself a reliable guide to a wildly diverse region on the cusp of old and new. --Shawn Carkonen

From Publishers Weekly

In a freewheeling, deeply meditative journey across "the big empty" (the 11 contiguous states west of the 100th Meridian), Egan, the Pacific Northwest correspondent for the *New York Times*, attempts to understand the American West, a place caught between myth and modernity. Beginning in Jackson Hole, Wyo., at a gathering of writers, ranchers and Native Americans debating "the next hundred years in the American West," Egan sets out across the vast landscape, using a different city as a jumping-off point in each chapter. What emerges is a portrait of the new West constantly at odds with the old: defiant cattlemen fight to preserve their dying industry, passing protective laws in the name of "custom and culture"; the residents of Butte, Mont., wait for the toxic waste from a huge abandoned copper mine to overflow and destroy the once-prosperous city; and everywhere ambitious communities such as Las Vegas scramble for more of the precious water that would bring life to the desert?life, that is, in the form of residential complexes with lush grass lawns. Egan's travelogue occasionally ties itself in knots, shifting continuously from past to present in an effort to evoke the multilayered history of the area. But his love for the land is tangible and his erudition impressive. Alongside tales of Indians ousted from their land and corporate plundering are striking factoids (e.g., Ted Turner now owns 1.5% of the state of New Mexico) and shadowy chapters in history, like the 1857 Mountain Meadow Massacre in St. George, Utah, in which over 120 Arkansas emigrants were murdered by Mormon "rescuers" in an attack ordered by church officials, according to Egan. If any effort to capture the American West on the printed page is as futile as the title of this book suggests, Egan's sobering and honest picture at least succeeds in conveying its vitality and myriad contradictions.

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From Library Journal

A scratchy blend of conservationist and crusader, Egan (Pacific Northwest bureau chief, *New York Times*) continues his exploration of Western history, country, and customs. But this time, following *The Good Rain* (LJ 7/90), he expands his horizons to include Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, and California (in addition to Washington and Oregon). Readers follow him as he searches

for pictographs in Utah, fishes in Idaho's Bitterroot Mountains, and visits an ostrich ranch in Colorado. Through these journeys-filled with fascinating facts, unusual encounters, and an abiding concern for the future of America's West?Egan eagerly exposes the worst of Western history, though he fails to provide solutions to any of the problems that continue to plague the Western lands he obviously loves deeply. From the Spanish conquistadors to Brigham Young's Saints, few explorers or settlers escape Egan's uncomfortable scrutiny?and contemporary residents seldom fare better. Recommended for most public libraries.?Janet N. Ross, Washoe Cty. Lib. System, Sparks, NV
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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