



The Texas Outback: Ranching on the Last Frontier (Charles and Elizabeth Prothro Texas Photography Series)

Bill Wright

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Surrounded by the spectacular setting of the Big Bend's rugged mountains, deep canyons, and arid pasturelands, a hardy group of settlers and their descendants have forged a livelihood and a way of life. Through vivid images and interviews with these men and women at home and at work, June Redford Van Cleef and Bill Wright offer a glimpse into this remnant of Texas' corner of the Old West.

Stories handed down from grandparents and great-grandparents tell of roping bears and mountain lions as well as cattle and goats, of drought years and gully washers, of homes across the Mexican border and homes built from the earth itself, of suffering and triumph, family bonds and loneliness. How they came to this remote area, why they stayed, what they hope for—these are the human elements in a region better known for its natural elements.

In dramatic photographs, the leathery, lined faces of men and women who have spent a lifetime working cattle in the desert sun offer visual contrast to the sheer rock cliffs and barbed wire fences behind them. Light and shadow, earth and sky play through the vistas where little else is play. Sheriffs, homemakers, herders, store owners, and cattle ropers people the spaces. Features familiar to Big Bend aficionados and remote areas usually seen only by those who live there provide memorable scenes where the heat and even the silences almost emanate from the page.

The old ranches of the region are breaking up; new landowners have come for different reasons and will put the land to different uses. But before the culture of rugged individualism and stoic stewardship of the land disappears completely, Wright and Van Cleef have captured it, as a record of and tribute to those who dared its challenges.

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