

A taste of Mike Puhallo

Written by Puhallo, Mike

Mike Puhallo is "the only cowboy poet to have his work read into the official record at a NASA launch,

the Canadian House of Commons and The British Columbia House of Legislature" according to his leaflet,

and has won the Will Rogers Gold Medallion Award for excellence in Cowboy Poetry (in front of the Americans

in Fort worth, Texas), and The Queens Golden Jubilee Medallion award for his poetry and his work in

preserving our ranching heritage, and in 2006 made it to the short list for the position of Canada's

Parliamentary Poet Laureate. Not bad for an unassuming cattleman from Kamloops. He has done it all as a

cowboy: he was a saddle bronc rider, a packer, a horse trainer. He currently ranches with his younger

brother, as well as writing "and painting in western oils." An avid student of the culture and history of

"the real west," Mike has been instrumental in establishing the B.C. Cowboys Hall of fame and has served

as President of the B.C. Cowboy heritage society.

Mike co-authored six books of cowboy poetry with three others now listed on his website

<http://www.twighlightranch.com/> As Mike readily admits, he got into poetry to get out of the hard work being

a working cowboy means. His royalties are small, but they do add up and are steady. One gets a sense that

the man can be all business as well as all poetry. He hires on as an MC, a speaker, or as a performing poet,

and has produced 3 CD-s that get lots of air time in Europe as well as North America, with one of them

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making it to the bestseller list. And he has done it all with the simplest of means.

Mike's website features his weekly "Meadow Muffins," which reflect on life around the ranch in a manner that

manages to have universal appeal. The first of three being featured here is typical. Mike goes for a walk to

lose some weight, but a two hour hike turns into three as well-meaning neighbors attempt to rescue him.

A real slice of rural Kamloops that speaks volumes of the friendliness and kindness still preserved in the

ranching community from days long gone by elsewhere, providing the reader with a sense of living history.

The title of "the muffin?" Well, "Hey Cowboy where's your Horse?" - of course!

A cowboy on foot

must be a pitiful sight!

She pulled her Jeep over,

to see if I was all right.

"It's Be Kind to Your Horse's Day,"

I replied,

I was walking to lose weight,

And not in need of a ride.

Another one stopped,

A half mile down the road.

"Did you lose your horse?"

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Were you injured or throwed?"

So my two hour walk

Was stretched into three

as each neighbor that passed

stopped to check up on me!

Another muffin records the encroachment of the city on this hard working yet idyllic life.

Its title hearkens back to the proverb "Good fences make good neighbors," but Mike, not wanting to step on

other folks' toes, is content to leave his title at "Good fences..." and generalizes the problem to soften the blow

of his complaint. Yet he is not mincing his words:

Out on our farms and rangelands

surrounding nearly every town,

there's a growing epidemic

of open gates and fences down.

As modern urban dwellers

Come out on the land to play

Cutting wire, busting fence posts,

And scattering thrash along the way.

Villages in ancient times

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Had walls tall and stout

To protect folks from the bandits

and keep the wild beasts out.

Chasing strays and fixing fences

wears the rancher's patience thin,

and often finds him wishing for a wall

to fence the town folks in.

The conflict is not new, as the lands around Kamloops are widely used by fisherman and hunters, bikers,

snowmobilers, campers, loggers and miners, to name a few. During the depression years the ranchers

found their best grazing lands, even lakes fenced off from their cattle by settlers engaged in subsistence

farming above Batchelor Hills, a few miles north of Kamloops. Mike knows this. Still, to folks of the ranching

community, outsiders still represent a burr under their saddle, and Mike is no exception.

People deeply steeped in tradition are skeptical of changes that may threaten their way of life, and are not

easily fooled. Witness Mike's reaction to the hue and cry raised about global warming in a recent muffin

about "The pineapple Express:"

On the East slope of the Rockies

the snow drifts are so deep,

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folks can't get out to feed their cows,
can't even find their sheep.

Some claim it's global warming,
that brung in all that snow,
caused the flooding on the west Coast,
aand made them wild winds blow.

When I was in school, they taught us,
about a time, not all that long ago,
when all Canada lay buried
beneath a pile of ice and snow.

Now I may not be that educated,
but this much is crystal clear,
if it weren't for a bit of global warming,
that ice would still be here!

Mike has an excellent website with many more muffins offered, and we can find his gate open
on

twilightranch.com site without any need of cutting wires or busting any of his posts.