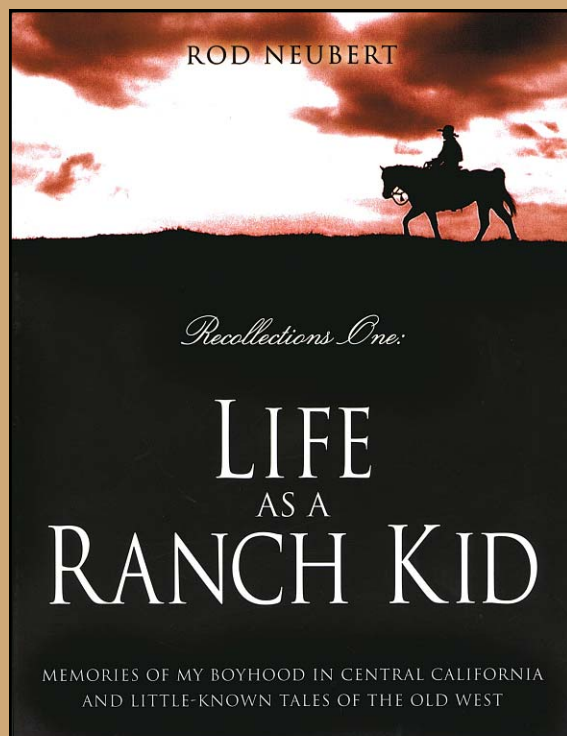


Remember the Ranch

In a changing agricultural landscape, one man seeks to preserve his family memories.

ARTICLE BY RYAN MILLER - EDITOR OF NEW TIMES

Rod Neubert introduces his book, *Recollections One: Life as a Ranch Kid*, with a letter that includes a warning: "Don't try to duplicate the adventures in this or my book on world adventures. I consider it truly a miracle that I'm not dead at this point and have never been seriously hurt."



Even a quick and cursory scan through his collection of ranch anecdotes will reveal a little of what he's talking about. There are encounters with coyotes, blinding bouts with poison oak, death-defying races, boat trips on choppy seas, pipe rifles that fire nails, bloody car accidents, and more.

But Neubert's book isn't a novel. It's more a series of reminiscences and recollections, gathered into 263 numbered vignettes arranged in a rough chronological order.

"I'm kind of a history nut, and what better kind of history than our own ranch?" Neubert said.

The book starts with the origins of the titular Pine Canyon Ranch—located mostly in the Salinas Valley—and winds its way back and forth through history and space, punctuating various thoughts along the way with collected quotes and photos. A segment on the native inhabitants of the ranch segues into stories of the 1800s, after which the book mostly focuses on Neubert, his family tree, and the assorted activities, trials, joys, and misadventures they've participated in over the years.

Neubert, who currently lives near Templeton with his wife and daughters,

eventually tells about his time at Cal Poly and his involvement with starting ASI Outings, now known as Poly Escapes, which offers students a chance to get way off campus and into the wild outdoors via backpacking, hiking, climbing, and other activities.

The complete work reads like a visit with someone sharing pieces of an adventuresome life spent mainly in the outdoors: It's peppered with candid photos, occasional non-sequiturs, and jumps in time. Some of the paragraphs read like straight stories. Others are more like essays or philosophical wanderings.

Neubert said that he preferred the *Chicken Soup for the Soul*-type format versus a more-traditional narrative. Tiny bites, metaphorically, are easier to digest.

"This book, you can pick it up, put it down," he said.

To compile the stories, Neubert searched his mind and thousands of photos, pored over family writings, and interviewed his 86-year-old father about his childhood. Then, he started putting everything in order.

"I'm very focused," he said. "I'd go into a coffee shop and come out eight hours later."

That process led him to come up with 600 ideas for stories. An editor helped him narrow down the focus into a couple hundred segments that readers would be most interested in.

Then, Neubert said, he went through about 30 or 40 drafts—adding that he probably could have gone on forever rewriting and revising. He even changed the layout after the book had been laid out once. But finally *Life as a Ranch Kid* came together.

Neubert has sold copies at Atascadero's Pioneer Days, the recent book fair in San Luis Obispo's Mission Plaza, and at horse events in Paso Robles. He likes the personal contact, he explained, so he's planning to sell most of the 3,500 copies of his self-published book at similar occasions, though it's available online and in two local independent bookstores. He thinks equine expos will be his biggest market, though he insists that he didn't write the



book to make money. Instead, he wrote it for several reasons: His grandfather and great-grandfather undertook similar projects, the process was cathartic for him, and, most of all, he hopes to keep the spirit of the true family ranch alive for his children and others.

Throughout the state, he said, family ranches are disappearing under subdivisions and corporate management. His goal is to inspire the next generation to appreciate what there is before it's gone, and, hopefully, to keep it from going away in the first place.

The book is also the first of what Neubert hopes will be many writing projects. He's currently working on a collection of stories about his world travels and is co-writing a book about raising teen-age daughters with his own daughters.

He considers himself to be semi-retired—but he's never going to retire, he said. He and his wife are looking forward to working with horses, writing books, and, in a few years, moving to the family ranch that inspired the book of recollections.

"Relatively simple things make me happy," Neubert wrote. "The love and companionship of my wife, the health and happiness of my family, freedom from excessive stress, and enough money to live a relaxed life."

Animal Magnetism

Rod Neubert enjoys writing and working with horses, such as Cricket, pictured here. His new self-published book, *Life as a Ranch Kid*, combines those two passions, and includes many more of his interests.



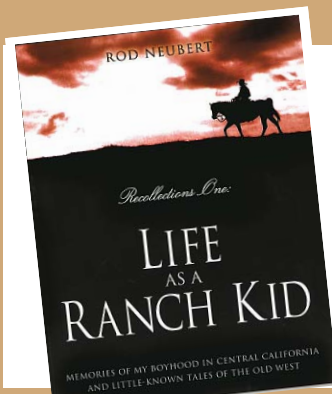
Local Connection:

– Born and raised on Pine Canyon Ranch located in the hills below Mount Toro, Rod Neubert's family has deep Central Coast roots.

– His grandfather, Bill Simas, purchased the property in 1942 and was the owner of the Triangle Fertilizer Co.

– His other grandfather owned and operated the Salinas Brewery, which was eventually renamed the Monterey Brewery.

– Now living in Templeton, Neubert expects to return to the family ranch in Pine Canyon after he retires in two years.



Rod Neubert's Recollections One:

LIFE AS A RANCH KID is available

The Books Are \$24.99 Each

To buy this book visit the Steinbeck Center or call 805-720-1132 and visit us online at: www.neubertbooks.com

