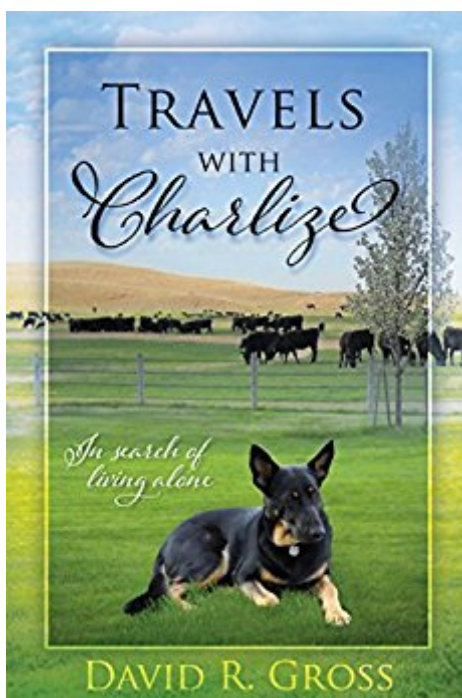


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Travels With Charlize: In Search Of Living Alone



Synopsis

After losing his wife of almost fifty-three years to cancer, David Gross adopts Charlize, a German shepherd rescue dog, buys a camping trailer, and the two begin their travels. They explore the West, visiting parks and vistas, rain forests and deserts, family, old friends and new. Accidents, adventures, sadness, joy, problems, and peace populate their journey of discovery. Ever patient and sensitive to her companion's feelings, Charlize remains close, attentive, and comforting, especially when needed most. And at every stop, she greets strangers with a loving heart and wagging tail, showing the way to embrace life. In *Travels with Charlize: In Search of Living Alone*, David Gross tells a gentle and open story of recovery. He knows he must go forward after his wife's death and face a new future, but that road carries rough spots. Memories spring up to hold him back. Revisiting friends reminds him of who no longer accompanies him. And home, to which he must return, still stores a profusion of painful memories. But Charlize's presence keeps Gross steady and willing to see a brighter tomorrow around the bend. In the end, that light shines strong for both.

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Customer Reviews

Wonderful. Much like the James Herriot's books and left me wanting more.

Started out well, but became drawn out. Too much history about people I don't know.

It was o.k. I got tired of reading it before I was through, but i did finish it.

It was very fun and interesting to read these travels. I have been to many of the same places so could really relate to the adventures.

After reviewing over 600 books, this is only the second time I've accepted a free copy for review and (so far) I'm batting a thousand. Dr. Gross is an experienced writer and he knows how to tell a story. In this case, the story is his own, beginning with the death of his beloved wife. Widows are the object of our deep sympathy, but widowers are treated as though their loss is somehow less significant. After all, a man can easily find another wife, right? It's good for us to be reminded that a loving partnership of many years cannot be replaced and that women don't have a monopoly on grief and loneliness. Surprisingly, it's not a morbid or depressing book. Although stunned by the loss of his wife, the author realized that he was still of importance to others - sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, his brother's family, and his many friends. He decided that his first months of grief would be easier if he left the home filled with memories and traveled. He bought a truck and a pull-behind camper called "The Frog" and acquired a German Shepherd. A rescue dog who had been abused, Charlize quickly became a treasured traveling companion and (like all German Shepherds) took very seriously her twin roles as guardian and comforter. If you have ever loved an animal, this story will resonant with you. But Dr. Gross is not just a widower and a dog lover. He's a scientist with a world view that I can only describe as skeptically idealistic. He's a member of the generation between the "Greatest Generation" and the Baby Boomers. He was too young for WWII and the Korean War and too old for Vietnam. What other country dates it's generations by wars? He's a family man, although the extent of this is slow to come out. Unlike a woman (who would build her story around her children and grandchildren) he mentions his family only in passing at first. But gradually it becomes apparent that his relationships with his sons and their families are deep and loving. He also cherishes friendships - many of them dating from his college years - and some of his best stories are of visits to his friends. He never loses himself in his grief, but always remains very much alive to what's going on around him. He's also a Westerner - born and bred - and he's

fascinated by the history of the West and by its present and future. He doesn't see the West with the rose-colored glasses of a new-comer, but with the eyes of experience and love. Having little first hand knowledge of the Western U.S., I found his descriptions, explanations, and musings as interesting as anything I've read in a long time. This is a wide-ranging book and one that will appeal to many people for many reasons. I was sent a free copy of this book in paperback in exchange for an honest review. If you have a device that supports color photographs, the ebook version is an even better choice because you'll get the full benefit of the beautiful pictures. On the other hand, you can pass the paperback along to friends and family when you've finished and (trust me) you'll want to. It's too good a book to keep to yourself.

Decades ago, John Steinbeck decided to discover America with his dog Charlie as his primary companion. David Gross adopted a dog and took to travel with a more modest proposal; to discover himself, with the help of a rescued German Shepherd, Charlize. Of course, Gross, a retired veterinarian knew who he was. Already an accomplished author and traveller, he had ideas about where he wanted to go, what to see, and I'm sure even had plans for this book. But marriage changes people, and when you've been married for a long time, your identity comes to be bound up with your partner. And when Rosalie, David's wife and companion for most of his life finally succumbed to cancer, he found himself adrift, unable to deal with the grief and unable to stay in the home he'd lived in for so long with its memories of a different period of his life, now gone. So, he adopted Charlize, an animal whose past apparently included nearly as much pain as his own (Charlize's behavior provides hints of abuse, but neither the author nor perhaps even the dog are fully cognizant of it), purchased a travel trailer, and set out on the road to discover what living life alone is like. Gross is a talented descriptive writer and each chapter, more of a vignette than a portion of a continuous narrative, includes observations and recollections of the American landscape, family and friendship, and the importance of animals to our lives. Nothing profound, but lots of simple truths are found here. Dogs, we are reminded, live in the present while we rush through life, alternately agonizing about, or dreaming of what the future might hold. We could learn a little from them. I immensely enjoyed the book. It is best read in short stretches, not straight through. One can then enjoy each description and reflect on the life lessons Gross closes to share. Although I have never met the author, he and I apparently have shared experiences with the the out of doors along the West Coast and in the Pacific Northwest. I was pleasantly surprised to see we gravitated to the same sorts of places and many of the areas the author describes are places I've visited. Although the book is ostensibly about travels with Charlize, I think the overarching question

the author strives to answer involves self worth. Technology he notes is rapidly replacing our need to do activities for ourselves, and he revels in the discovery of people and places where activities still center around human action. For example, Gross is captivated by ranch living, and especially the branding of cattle, a deliberate relic of a bygone age when community was more important than accomplishing something with ease. (One imagines that soon enough branding will be obsolete with the continuing decline in price for micro-chipping.) But Gross fails to see that his own journey is itself about to become a relic of a bygone age. Due to largely unreasonable fears about global warming, the government is busy trying to ratchet up the price of all forms of energy, effectively limiting ones ability to travel and enjoy life. Indeed, Gross himself feels the effects of these regulatory experiments when he quickly discovers after a mere year of travel that fuel prices make voyages like his prohibitive. He ultimately sells his trailer and truck at a loss, content that he has recovered from his grief with the help of his animal companion, and a new partner who gradually enters his life. But he is more fortunate than those who will follow him. Soon it is likely that the only way anyone not among the wealthy elites will only able to enjoy the fruits of this sort of self discovery is vicariously, by means of web cams and the like. And society will be poorer for it.

After losing his wife of fifty-three years, Rosalie, to cancer, David rebooted his life and started over again. Knowing he would need help facing the future without Rosalie, he adopt a rescue dog who he renamed Charlize. For emotional healing, they set out on a travel adventure visiting family and friends, reconnecting with old acquaintances, and seeking new experiences. This book is a great read for anyone who is undergoing an emotional transition; and anyone who just loves dogs. It's an uplifting account of how our bond with canine companions makes life brighter, and more hopeful. I'm now reading David's other book, *Animals Don't Blush*: wonderful!

Am a "traveler" (people who explore via an RV, not campers) too and have been to many of the places Gross covers in his travels, therefore find his descriptions interesting and his tales of RV traveling humorous.

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