



The Boy Who Invented Skiing: A Memoir

Swain Wolfe

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In his memoir, **THE BOY WHO INVENTED SKIING**, Swain Wolfe captures a West that no longer exists--from growing up on ranches in the high country of Colorado and Montana to working underground as a miner for Anaconda Copper in Butte.

Swain Wolfe spent his childhood in magical places, exploring the mesas and tunnels of his father's tuberculosis sanatorium near the Garden of the Gods and later his step-father's six-thousand-acre ranch on a horse named Joe. Nature was his mirror, allowing him to escape his parents' failing marriage, his father's despair, and his mother's brutal second marriage.

As a young boy, Swain risked life and limb by strapping his galoshes to homemade, cross-country skis he found in the hayloft. Aided by milk barn brooms for poles, he invented a primitive form of downhill racing.

Family violence forced a move away from the mountains and wild rivers of Colorado to Missoula, Montana. Having defined himself in the natural world, he found the people in town as alien as they found him. He spent his life attempting to understand his intelligent, dangerously complex mother, who was far ahead of her time.

He discovered he could immerse himself in work as he had in nature. He learned to work with draft horses and saw the end of the era of horse-drawn farm equipment. He worked in lumber mills, led a crew into one of Montana's worst forest fires, and cut timber until the trees started talking to him. But it was mining thousands of feet below the earth's surface that changed his life.

Swain absorbed the skills of natural storytellers--ranchers, loggers, and miners--and tells the stories of the free thinkers, hardscrabble philosophers, desperate characters, spirited women and outsider artists who embodied the boom spirit of the West after World War II.

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