

Every WOMAN HAS A Story



In this issue, Ardis Eckel introduces you to Nancy Rekow—who I “met” unknowingly in the early '80s. Longtime west-coast islander Minnie Rose Lovgreen confided to her friend Nancy at her bedside that she'd long wanted to pass on her recipe for raising chickens. Before Minnie died, Nancy helped her put 60 years' worth of know-how into a hand-lettered, illustrated, 30-page booklet that I checked out of my public library close to 30 years ago. Once I'd read it, I knew I needed my own copy, but the book had gone out of print, so I “borrowed” my favorite portions of it by writing down parts of her “recipe” and following it over the years. Last summer, I received a press release about its third release, autographed by Nancy, and I knew it was cause for celebration! With ageless mother wit and “pluck,” it's a voice from a lost world that is VERY relevant to modern-day chicken lovers.



BY ARDIS ECKEL

Here is where Ardis Eckel profiles women living outside the norm. Ardis, who is retired, was a beautician for over 30 years. She lives in a tiny Idaho burg bordered by rushing water, nestled at the foot of a pine-studded mountain. Being a beautician is about more than fixing hair. It's listening to women's stories.

“Cows are the foster mother of the human race,” Wisconsin's Governor William Dempster Hoard once said. He even had a notice posted in his barn: “Remember that this is the Home of Mothers. Treat each cow as a Mother should be treated.””



For the love of Bessie, grab a glass of milk, pull up a comfy chair, and partake of a cow tale or two! Whether you've worked with cattle, milked cows, branded steers—or not—if you ever yearned to farm or manage a ranch, you'll enjoy the heartwarming and dramatic stories in *True Cow Tales: Literary Sketches and Stories by Farmers, Ranchers, and Dairy Princesses*, edited by C.R. Lindemer. Forty stories by farmers and ranchers in the U.S. and Canada will open your eyes to what really goes on in those pastoral scenes. Read about a 101-year-old cowgirl; close calls with bulls, cows, and cops; steer roping; cattle branding; herds escaping; and dairy princesses. Author Sara Rath writes, “I have fallen in love with this collection of stories and poems. You'll find stories of love and sorrow, of gentle cattle who nuzzled for hugs, and of farmers who had to give up their farms. Funny or sad, every story, every poem, has a genuine thread of love running through from beginning to end.” www.truecowtales.com



RAISING CHICKENS

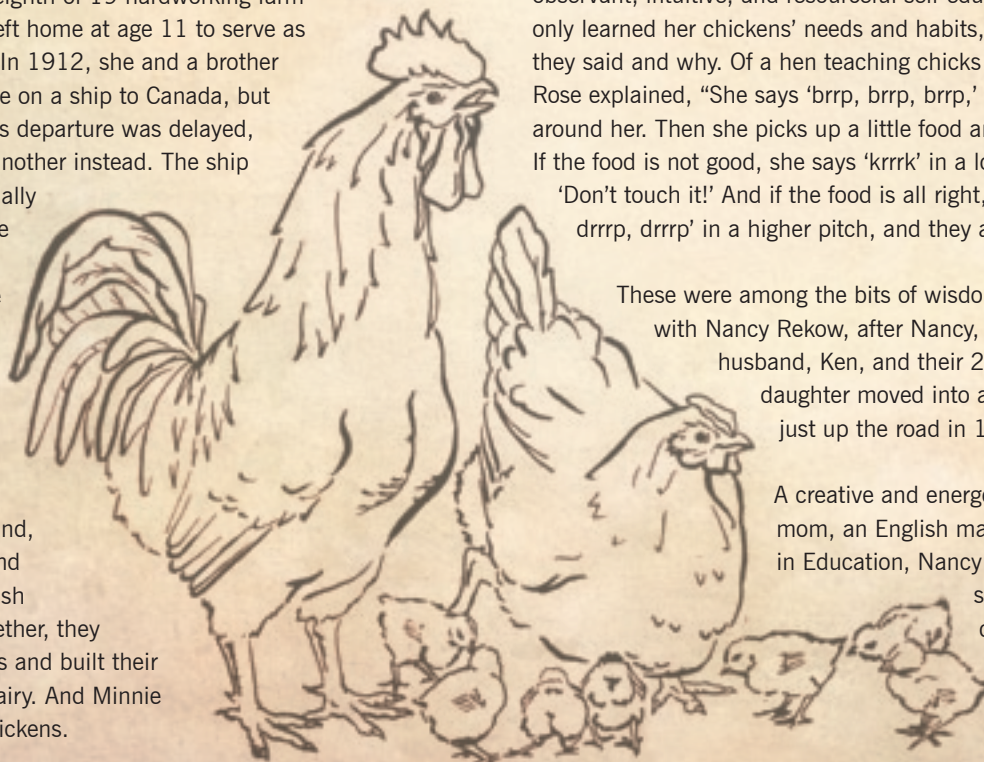
Some gifts begin with brilliant solitary threads. But life turns them into tapestries tied together by time. “The threads tie everything together,” Nancy Rekow says. “I’m now about the age Minnie Rose Lovgreen was when we met in 1964. Back then, I had no idea how meeting her would transform my life.”

Nor could Minnie Rose have known how meeting Nancy would change hers. But 10 years later, a priceless present to chicken lovers everywhere was spilled into a tape recorder by an elderly woman in a hospital bed because her friend chose to make a dream come true. Now, *Minnie Rose Lovgreen’s Recipe for Raising Chickens*, first published in 1975 and long out of print, is out again in a third edition.

It’s the result of those twisting, twining threads. And looking back, the warp and weft of the weave are so much easier to see.

One bright thread began with Minnie Rose’s birth in England in 1888. The eighth of 19 hardworking farm children, she left home at age 11 to serve as a lady’s maid. In 1912, she and a brother booked passage on a ship to Canada, but when the ship’s departure was delayed, they boarded another instead. The ship they had originally booked was the *Titanic*, whose maiden voyage would prove to be its last.

In 1920, Minnie Rose moved to Bainbridge Island, Washington, and married a Danish dairyman. Together, they raised two sons and built their own thriving dairy. And Minnie Rose raised chickens.



Minnie Rose Lovgreen

Although she had little formal schooling, Minnie Rose was an observant, intuitive, and resourceful self-educator. She not only learned her chickens’ needs and habits, she divined what they said and why. Of a hen teaching chicks to eat, Minnie Rose explained, “She says ‘brpp, brpp, brpp,’ and they all come around her. Then she picks up a little food and drops it down. If the food is not good, she says ‘krrrk’ in a low tone, meaning ‘Don’t touch it!’ And if the food is all right, she says ‘drrrp, drrrp, drrrp’ in a higher pitch, and they all come and eat.”

These were among the bits of wisdom she shared with Nancy Rekow, after Nancy, her then husband, Ken, and their 2-year-old daughter moved into an old farmhouse just up the road in 1964.

A creative and energetic stay-at-home mom, an English major with an MS in Education, Nancy already knew something about chickens from her rural New Jersey childhood. She

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knew something about the British, too, since she'd taught classes in England with the U.S. Air Force for two years. "I loved it there, the farms and villages and people."

So Minnie Rose would call and give Nancy tips on all sorts of things. "I was a little lonely," Nancy says. "Over the years, we'd visit back and forth. And one day, she gently slid a newly hatched chick into the sleeve of my daughter's coat, saying, 'Isn't that soft, isn't it warm in there? That keeps them happy.'"

"I realized again how much Minnie Rose knew," says Nancy. "And that 'keeping them happy' wasn't just for chickens, but for children as well." By this time, Nancy had four children and had a hard time finding a sitter when she volunteered at school or rode the ferry into Seattle. "Do you ever babysit?" she asked Minnie Rose. Minnie Rose answered, "Oh yes, my dear. I've been taking care of children since I was 5 years old." Nancy relates, "My children, especially the younger two, became quite close to her." The connection grew. "She taught me so many things."

When, at 86, Minnie Rose was diagnosed with cancer in the winter of 1974–75, Nancy wanted to give something back. So arriving at the hospital one day, she said, "Minnie Rose, today we'll start that chicken book you've always wanted to write."

And they did. Nancy transcribed Minnie's tape-recorded words, edited the manuscript, and hand-lettered the 30-page book. But unlike the storybook's little red hen who had to do everything from planting the wheat to baking the bread alone, Nancy had willing help.

A third thread and another of Minnie Rose's friends, talented artist Elizabeth Hutchinson Zwick, illustrated the

story with vibrant detailed sketches. Ed Doremus, a retired printer with a basement business, printed 1,000 copies. Then Nancy, Elizabeth, and others held a book-building party. They collated, stacked, folded, and pressed pages, then hand-stapled every book. The result was cream-colored pages inside a tan cover, across which inked chickens scratched and pecked. The third edition, with a mustard-gold cover, includes all that and four extra pages of book reviews, plus excerpts from a forthcoming book, *Far As I Can Remember*, the story of Minnie Rose's life.

Those brilliant threads bound Nancy and Minnie Rose from beginning to end. Minnie Rose cared for Nancy's children. Nancy helped with Minnie Rose's care at home until she died in July 1975.

But not before Minnie Rose saw the book's first printing. Not before she sat and autographed over 500 copies for a May 1975 book-signing party. Not before she appeared on "Seattle Today" on King 5 TV. And not before a second printing of 20,000 books rolled off the press and into stores nationwide.

And still the weaver worked. Elizabeth, who hadn't pursued an art-based career, earned a graphic design degree and has designed and illustrated various other books. Nancy became a widely-published poet. She tutors; teaches creative writing;

and helps others write, edit, and self-publish

books. Most

recently,

she and

her partner,

retired teacher

and published

poet Everett

Thompson,

created their

own publishing

company. The third

edition of *Minnie*

Rose Lovgreen's

Recipe for Raising

Chickens is available

on their website, [www.](http://www.nwtrilliumpress.com)

[nwtrilliumpress.com](http://www.nwtrilliumpress.com) or

by calling 206-

842-6908.

