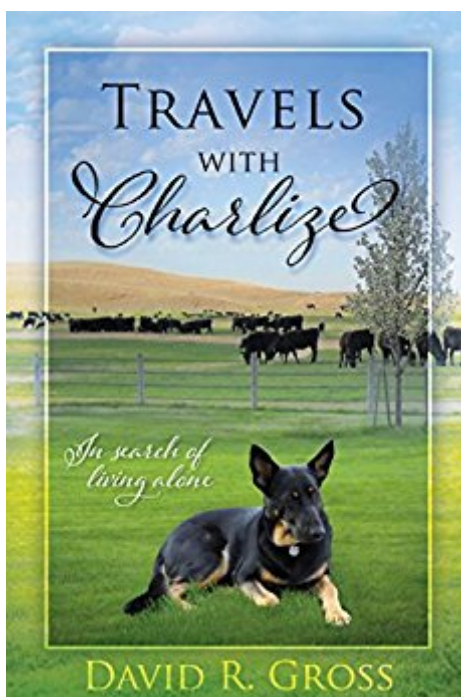


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Travels With Charlize: In Search Of Living Alone



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

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.

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.

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