



Woodswoman IV: Book Four of the Woodswoman's Adventures

Anne LaBastille

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Anne LaBastille and her German shepherds experience more daring, death defying encounters in the wilderness, and with humans, than ever before. WOODSWOMAN IIII covers five years, rather than ten, since life has speeded up both at her log cabin and old farm. Anne juggles hard to achieve balance between making a living as a freelance writer and publisher, and as a cabin-dweller and contemplative. Her humorous descriptions of the miserly book factory show the complex demands on her time. These are contrapuntal to her exquisite images of Adirondack nature and wildlife and the harmony she finds therein.

Despite fewer days at the cabin, each visitation holds greater intensity, more loveliness, interdependence and familiarity with her pets and wildlife. Her message to women everywhere is: Be Courageous, Be Independent, and Be Compassionate. Her message to readers is captured in this visionary chronicling of sociological events and ecological changes over 35 years in the Adirondack Park.

Woodswoman IV: Book Four of the Woodswoman's Adventures Details

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From Reader Review Woodswoman IV: Book Four of the Woodswoman's Adventures for online ebook

Christine says

I recently learned that Dr. LaBastille passed away in July 2011. This book is not the charming volume that the first three were, but I value it as part of the series. My copy is signed, too, which makes it all the more valuable to me.

Nicole says

Loved every book in this series. Feeling sad that this is the last. What a remarkable woman and remarkable life.

Christine says

This is not like the first 2 books, more a collection of short stories about Anne's Adirondack friends. It has not much new about Anne's life to offer.
I was disappointed.

Bunnyhugger says

I think this obituary does a great job in summing up Anne LaBastille's spirit.

<http://www.adirondackexplorer.org/sto...>

I've found her series of books to be addictive. I greatly admire her vibrancy and independence and just dogged persistence. She has been described as the female Thoreau. No doubt she had her contradictions, some of which are mentioned in the article above. For me, it was puzzling after reading about the self-sufficiency of living in her rustic cabin, environmental passions, and deep love of the wild creatures around her (she refused to hunt), to then come across passages about grilling steaks and hotdogs on the fire.

Zinta says

And here we are, at the last book in the Woodswoman series, oddly enough numbered IIII rather than IV. Anne LaBastille has carried us, her readers, through nearly four decades of living in the Adirondacks, a decade per book, with this last one covering about half that.

The series begins with LaBastille building a log cabin in Adirondack wilderness shortly after a divorce in her mid 20s. Now, she is a much older woman, however spry and spunky, still. Her wilderness living is not so wild anymore, as her property on Big Bear Lake (a fictional name) has been encroached upon by more residents, but more painfully, many more boaters on the lake. With each book, we witness increasing problems with all manner of pollution, climate change, and simple human lack of consideration for others and for the environment. LaBastille has taken an ever more involved role in fighting for ecological concerns, and an important part of her story is that fight, along with the resistance she meets. Some of that resistance is so fierce that it results in arson, cut brake and gas lines, and physical threats.

While the first two books in the series were more faithful to the Woodswoman title, the third (see my earlier review) became more of a story of self-publishing, a tad self-aggrandizing in the process. This fourth book returns to the theme of living with nature. It is not so much about LaBastille in her cabin and the surrounding woods (she seems to spend less and less time there), but it does go back to love of nature and love of animals. It's also a pretty good read.

LaBastille is invited to teach at a southern college. She teaches nature writing, a favorite topic, and quite logically, wishes to take her students out into nature so as to make them better nature writers. A college administrator pulls her aside. Is this safe? he asks. She had planned to have the students camp solo for 24 hours, providing a list of needed camping gear and supplies, each 500 feet distant from the next. It hurts to laugh when reading the discussion between LaBastille and the college administrator, as they discuss legalities, issues of safety, and a weird fear of nature. One wonders where this fear goes when students walk city streets on a daily basis. It is also a sad commentary at how isolated we have become from the natural world around us.

Ironically, LaBastille does encounter danger when scoping out a state park for good camping sites. Not from wildlife, but from man. Several drunken gunmen fire weapons at her, her dog, Xandor, and Abe, a colleague who has come along for the hike. It very nearly reads like a thriller. Sound survival skills, however, learned from many previous wilderness treks, save the day.

Less interesting are more self-publishing adventures, and only mildly interesting a chapter about LaBastille's adopted stray cat, Chunita. A little too cutesy, with a series of photos captioned in the cat's voice.

LaBastille's dog stories do better, and her devotion to her animals is clear in yet another aging pet story, as another German Shepherd (all her dogs are) ages and falls ill. Chekika is a particular favorite, and LaBastille fights valiantly to keep the dog alive through various afflictions, almost to the point of going too far. Each time she loses a dog, someone has to remind her it is time to let go. Not doing so becomes more selfish than loving. But LaBastille finally does let go, and the story will touch the heart of any dog lover.

The fourth Woodswoman book is an enjoyable addition to the series—not at the level of the first book, clearly the highest quality book of all four, not as pure to wilderness living theme as the second, but a pleasing move back up from the third in the series. We read more nature writing, more scenes such as one of a hummingbird seeking refuge from an aggressive male of its species, more scenes about loons living on the lake, more insights into the precarious tipping of the balance in human disregard for the earth. We are drawn into a thrilling adventure story in the field. We see civilization juxtaposed against nature. We are also introduced to a new friend, Albert, later revealed as Clarence Petty, a wilderness guide who really has been a woodsman all his life.

This is a fitting ending to LaBastille's life story. If various sources hold true, she is now living under the care of health professionals, rumored to be suffering from Alzheimer's. Tragically, she warned of this in an

earlier book, when testing water samples from the lake and finding dangerously high levels of mercury and other metals, which may cause Alzheimer's in humans. We wish her well, and thank her for the window on the natural world that she has provided.

Anne LaBastille is the author of nine books, including the Woodswoman series, and approximately 180 articles on nature and similar topics. She has worked as a wilderness guide, and has led programs to introduce women to wilderness living. She has long been dedicated to preserving the Adirondack State Park, where her wilderness journey began.

D. says

A readable good book.

This is just what it says, and continues the story (true) of Anne LaBastille.

Diane says

I finished this book while on a hiking trip in the Mojave Desert, and it was a great place to read more stories from the Woodswoman. I'm sure she would have appreciated the sun and fresh air, though her beloved German Shepherds wouldn't have fared well.

I've read all four of the Woodswoman books now, and overall, they are a charming collection for anyone who loves the outdoors.

Marty Hogan says

The trilogy of "Woodswoman" has gone one step further by allowing the public one more look into Dr. Anne LaBastille's unique wilderness life. One might get the feeling that after dozens of conservationist and environmental oriented books that Dr. LaBastille might tire of letting the public peer into her private life. Fortunately for us, this didn't happen.

"Woodswoman III" is more than just another tapestry of stories and events of these last five years. It marks an abrupt change in the life of a woman who cannot live without a tough balance of serene isolation and public duty. It is a mix of wilderness ideologies and humorous, but tough modern realities.

The reader is always treated to nearly mystical stories of the woods. These include retreating from the remote cabin on the last day of winter thaw as six inches of water cover her remote lake. The ice cold winter water bubbles up through holes from the weight of the ice as she passes over. It is harrowing. The romanticism of the mountains is revealed through generations of bold and gregarious wild loons who seem to recognize their neighbor without fear, even seeming to welcome her.

Danger is also not lacking, as Anne tells of a southern camping excursion where she and a companion were shot at and chased through an Appalachian valley, hiding overnight, cold, wet and terrified. Her ever faithful dogs put her to the test as they get older and desperately try to protect their lifelong companion, while she

cannot bear to see their inevitable mortality.

The reality of life as a writer and lecturer continue, however, and the reader learns hard but humorous facts about the complex and harried life of a writer who decides to publish her own books. Her "miserly book factory" is an essay on the realities of making a sparse living from writing of your endeavors. It's hard to believe she uses no computer and the one telephone line is only shared with a FAX machine.

This latest edition in the "Woodswoman" series contains a more modern note than the previous, but that may be the point. Society moves on and one can only ignore the madness of progress so far before your life becomes less meaningful. The last chapter called, "Trust" seems to embody Anne LaBastille's philosophy about her lifestyle. It is touching, moving and without regrets. This edition lives up to its remarkable predecessors.

Dr. Anne LaBastille wrote the foreword to Christopher Angus' new book, The Extraordinary Adirondack Journey of Clarence Petty: Wilderness Guide, Pilot, and Conservationist. Her book also includes photos by Gary A. Randorf, photographer and author of The Adirondacks: Wild Island of Hope (Creating the North American Landscape).

This is Dr. Anne LaBastille's last book, having past away on July 1st, 2011 at the age of 75. She will be missed.

Sal says

Loved all of her books - she died in 2011, and a friend and myself went up to Twitchell Lake to honor her memory. While she was alive, she called her tiny lake Black Bear Lake to keep nosy readers like me away! After her death, the actual lake was disclosed and it was right near where we were camping that summer, so we just stood at the boat launch and remembered her. Anne LaBastille really helped me learn to love the Adirondacks! Thanks, Anne!
