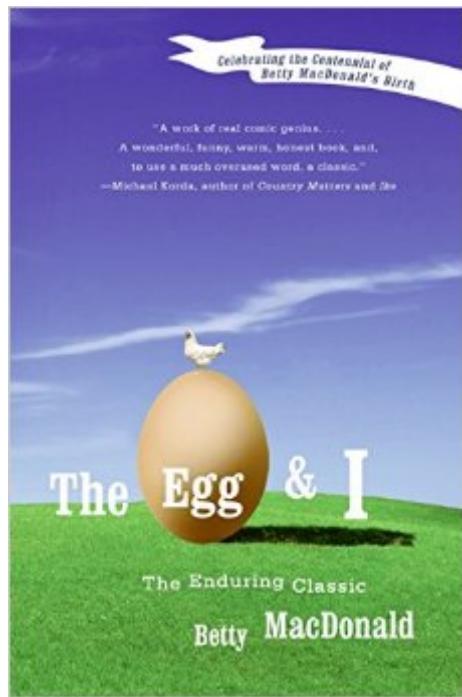


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The Egg And I



Synopsis

When Betty MacDonald married a marine and moved to a small chicken farm on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, she was largely unprepared for the rigors of life in the wild. With no running water, no electricity, a house in need of constant repair, and days that ran from four in the morning to nine at night, the MacDonalds had barely a moment to put their feet up and relax. And then came the children. Yet through every trial and pitfall "through chaos and catastrophe" this indomitable family somehow, mercifully, never lost its sense of humor. A beloved literary treasure for more than half a century, Betty MacDonald's *The Egg and I* is a heartwarming and uproarious account of adventure and survival on an American frontier.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For three days I read this book with a grin on my face and laughter in my belly. Towards the end of the book I was actually laughing out loud, with no one around to hear my glee. Betty describes, in wonderful detail, life on a chicken ranch and life with neighbors and various animals. Since I grew up in the country and my parents on a farm, I could relate to her wonderful descriptions of the sunrise and wild animals. I enjoyed it thoroughly and recommend this delightful read to anyone. (And I learned a few things about chickens as well.)

One of the funniest books ever written, *The Egg and I* is all the more remarkable because it sounds completely contemporary, even though it was written more than 50 years ago and describes events that took place more than 70 years ago. MacDonald had a relentlessly clear eye, a sharp, witty

writing style and in her own way was as liberated as was possible for her time (she was divorced and a single mother when such things were considered heinous). And I'd like to say one thing: although she does write disparagingly of some Native Americans living in her area, I think this is more due to a specific dislike of certain people she met rather than a blanket prejudice (early in the book she talks about her love and admiration for the Plains Indians who lived near her childhood home). I think McDonald was a singularly unbiased person, something also unique for a white woman of her era; one only has to read about the close friendships she made with Japanese-American and African-American women in "The Plague and I" (her account of her stay in a tuberculosis sanitarium) to realize this. No misguided PC agenda should deter anyone from reading MacDonald's irreverent and hilarious stories. She was a terrific writer.

I can remember my mother reading this book fifty years ago, and even though she has long since passed away, to this day I can still hear her laughter while reading this book. The more years that pass and the more technologically driven we become, the more hilarious "The Egg and I" becomes. Moving from a city to "the boonies" to raise chickens on a chicken farm is quite a challenge, especially in the 1940's which is the setting for this book. No electricity and no indoor plumbing are quite a jump from modern civilization even in that era. Of course, in that day, women were expected to be obedient wives, prepared to follow their husband's wild and sometimes bizarre dreams no matter where they may lead. The author tells it all in a matter of fact way, with a spicy, witty sense of humour. Almost every page will keep the reader laughing out loud. It is easy to see why this book remains popular 61 years after it was first published! Betty MacDonald is no longer with us, but her memory lives on and still continues to bring us joy and laughter through her books. Also recommended is her book, "Onions in the Stew."

It is hard to image anyone NOT liking this book! Even if you don't know a thing about raising chickens or even if you do (I have given this book to two chicken-raising relatives!), this book is hilarious. I mean, I laughed out loud! Quite frankly, it is the best of her books for adults. Maybe that's because I could imagine life for a young, unsuspecting city girl in the untamed Northwest, trying to make a go of a life and a marriage she was clearly unsuited for. Sounds rough, huh? But Betty makes it fun, crazy and adventurous! Yes, it is true the language and depiction of the surrounding Native Americans can be rather off color. In fact her daughters mention this in the introduction of later printed versions of this book. Please try to take it with a grain of salt, for the times were different back then (the story takes place far before it was actually written) and I am sure if Betty

were alive today her tone would be much more politically correct and sensitive. For this is not a story of a spoiled, racist girl in the wilderness, but rather the memoirs of a very funny and gifted young woman just trying to follow her mother's advice for a happy marriage by supporting her husband's career choice. I think this book is timeless and a must read no matter what generation you are from.

Betty McDonald's books are timeless due to their wit, hilarity, wonderfully descriptive language, and their author's determination to find the positive or "funny" in any catastrophic situation, whether personal--failing marriage, or national--the Great Depression. She brings her environment and experience to life to such a degree that you literally smell, taste, and feel her words. When she's talking about food, you crave it; when she writes about gardening, you get the urge to go plant something, and when she describes the people close to her, you start missing your friends and family. Above all, however, her humor will help you through any crises of your own. It has helped me through quite a few, and I keep returning to her books over a decade after I have discovered them. As for the author's racially charged remarks towards the pacific native Americans, I would love to encourage everyone to look past them and realize McDonald's limitations in her views given by the period of her life, the culture of that period, and the upbringing she received that stemmed from her socioeconomic and ethnic background. Yes, some of the comments might make today's educated person cringe a bit, but take them as a reminder of how far we have come. Keep in mind that we all have the same limitations of our understanding as she did, but we have the benefit of 60 some odd years of progress.

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