



It doesn't get any better for **Waddie Mitchell** fans. On the heels of his outstanding *Sweat Equity* CD, America's top cowboy poet has released an equally outstanding collection, *One Hundred Poems*. Both are produced by the estimable Western Jubilee Recording Company.

And what great companion offerings they are. Where the CD offers a breadth of humor and thoughtfulness, the book offers an ever greater depth of both.

"A Poet with Something to Say" is the book's first poem, and its nimble lines well describe the author himself, in their description of a "timeless story rustler" who, "...sets the mind and heart a'bustle/ Cuts the fat and leaves the muscle/ While inviting to examine if its true/ Then he leaves its resolution up to you."

Waddie Mitchell likes to give advice, honestly rooted in his own unshakeable cowboy values. It is the kind of counsel that goes down easily, as in "Harsh Words": "Bonds won't break by disagreement/ But sharp tongues will cut them clean" and in "No Second Chance, "Yea, if we could just but re-live time/ our lives could be enhanced/ But, best try to do things first time 'round/ cuz, there ain't no second chance."

He has strong feelings about the dangers the West faces, as expressed in the "Once upon a time" of the poem "Sentence," "... where miles outnumbered people/ and self-reliance prevailed..." "We the People" asserts, "This ain't about which party, they're both dirty beyond bath/ It's about the mav'rick snowball on the roll/ That's grown big enough to devastate whatever's in its path/ and officially is now beyond control." In "For Promises Due," he writes of a Shoshone rancher's plight, "So like rustlers of old with no order from the court/ And against what all stock law allows/ The BLM stole Raymond's means of support/ And unlawfully auctioned his cows." His own Vietnam War experience informs poems such as "Invisible Wounds" and "The Bristlecone Pine."

Then for a lot of flat-out fun, there are all sorts of cowboy characters, peg-legged pigs, goats, dogs, horses, bulls, cows, cat-astraphes, privies, booze, women, windies, and wrecks. As in "Infraction Distraction," the poet "knows guys that stories wanna happen to."

There's so much more on many other topics. That includes a whole lot of heart and something larger. There's an emphasis on action, with a kind of urgency that only age knows. As gracefully as it begins, with "A Poet with Something to Say," the book ends with "Another Day" in which "His life is spent on a highway bent/ on taking him away/ The rented rooms and greasy spoons are staples of his day..." And this time the advice may be as much to the poet as to the reader, "Go seize the day. Go, make the hay/ the sun won't always shine/ And nothing takes forever/ 'specially running out of time."

Waddie Mitchell brings years of experience to bear in these poems, and there is a sure maturity of effort in many of them. But, also, something interesting and rare about him rises to the top. You can listen to an early recording, read an early poem, compare them to new offerings, have a conversation with him, and what stands out is that deep down, nothing has changed the man himself, despite his rise to the top of the cowboy poetry world. He's real. His emotions are true. His humble cowboy beginnings are what shape him and his poetry. He and his work remain approachable in every sense.

These "One Hundred Poems" offer plenty of laughs, much philosophy, and abundant food for thought. Like a reliable friend, it's the sort of companion you'll be happy to keep nearby. You can open it up at just about any page and be the better for having taken it in.

Another dazzling portrait by respected Western Artist William Matthews adorns the cover of the handsome book.

Find more about Waddie Mitchell at Western Jubilee, www.westernjubilee.com and in our feature at CowboyPoetry.com, www.cowboypoetry.com/waddie.htm. Find order information for *One Hundred Poems* at www.westernjubilee.com/onehundredpoems.htm.

