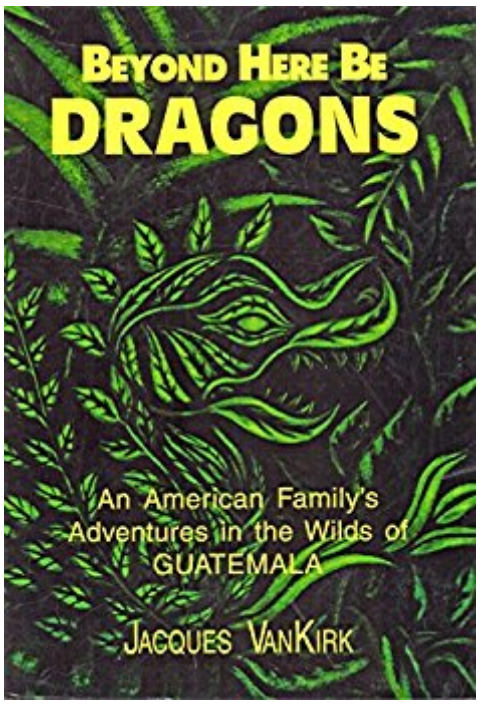
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Beyond Here Be Dragons: Tales From A Jungle (Guatemala Book 1)



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“Beyond Here Be DragonsÃ¢â ¬Â• is the true story of some of the adventures and misadventures of a family that really didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know what they were doing when they found themselves in one of the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great rainforests, El Peten, in Guatemala. At the time Guatemala was embroiled in a society-wide social conflict that ran for decades. Actions by both sides, left and right, measured by civilized standards, were atrocious.Their first home was in the Indian village of Sayaxche located on a curve of the Rio Pasion. The village was surrounded by virgin jungle for hundreds of kilometers in any direction. They survived by shooting deer and wild pig, and trading the meat for things like coffee and sugar. Eventually, the Guatemalan Government assigned a large area to the family reachable only by a motor-driven dugout up an arroyo to the lagoon Paqtixbatun. The author, VanKirk, began eking out a living guiding visitors hunting jaguars. There are several spell-binding stories, some good some bad, about the clients that the family met over the years and the life the family they lived.There were pistoleros, one that claimed to have killed nineteen men and wanted VanKirk to be number twenty. The family had a close encounter with the Fer de Lance, the deadly reptile the Indians call the Ã¢â ¬Å“The Three Step Snake,Ã¢â ¬Â• because of the belief that if you were bitten, you could take only three steps before death. There are spiders as big as a dinner plates, insects that if crawling on your arm could dig in with hundreds of legs, and worms that live in your flesh and breathe through a small hole in your body.The book introduces Marvin, the Kinkajou who became part of the family; plus countless stories of other jungle animals. Large turtles were caught and tethered in the lagoon where they eventually became dinner for unexpected guests. The family faced serious threats, including death. The finding of oil in the area forced the family out of El Peten. When ancient map makers ran out of actual true readings, they would simply state Ã¢â ¬Å“Beyond Here Be Dragons.Ã¢â ¬Â• This is where the family found itself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I met Jacques at Dona Louisa’s shop in Antiqua in 1970. Memories of our conversations stayed with me and one recent day, I found this book listed on . When it arrived, I had trouble putting it down. I could almost hear Jacques speaking as the stories unfolded. After I finished it, I found Jacques phone number and called him to tell him how much I enjoyed the book. Then, I ordered "Remarkable Remains" and can’t wait until it arrives. The life Jacques, Parney and their girls had in Guatemala would never again be possible. This book shows how rich life could be, far from the city. Parney’s rubbing of a Mayan boat carving that I bought in Antigua, I’m having framed to hang on my wall after it has been packed away and forgotten for so many years.

It not often that a non-fiction book can keep me turning the pages as if it were a work of fiction. I hated to put down BEYOND HERE BE DRAGONS. The book traces the life of a family whose intentions were to move to Alaska, yet somehow ended up in southern Mexico, and finally in Guatemala. It is an account of the 25 years that photo-journalist Jacques Van Kirk, and his wife Parney, also a photojournalist spent in the jungles of Guatemala. To add to the suspense, they had their two young daughters with them. Even though I knew they came out of their adventures relatively unscathed, as I read, I was afraid for them. Life in the Guatemala jungle proved to be far different from what they had ever known and far more rewarding than they ever expected. The reader gets the vicarious experience of the trials and joys of these twenty-five years.

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Reading this memoir, I felt as if I were continuing the conversation with Jacques VanKirk begun many years ago at El Indio Perdido, a lodge near the Belize-Guatemala border. He is a superb story-teller with the rare ability to translate that into his writing. Because of my brief connection with Parney and Jacques VanKirk, I found his account of the rigors the family faced in their daring move to the Peten region especially fascinating. My more recent visit to Guatemala's Maya ruins included many of the sites so vividly described in the book, including Rio Passion, Dos Pilos, and Sayaxche. Despite flawed editing, the book held my attention to the end, which maintained verisimilitude by not tacking on a phony climax.

FASCINATING ACCOUNT OF JUNGLE LIFE

Beyond Here Be Dragons is a marvelous book. The reader comes away with a great deal of admiration for the author and his entire family in this Swiss Family Robinson-like adventure in the wilds of Guatemala. The narrative voice is warm and engaging and this adventure is told with a splendid sense of humor. This story of an American family in the rain forest of Guatemala's Peten is not just a story of man against nature. It is a story of man, woman, and children against nature as the author, Jacques VanKirk, includes the tales of his sharpshooter wife, Parney, and his two adorable daughters, Parney Lynn and Gayle as they adjust to life in this dangerous and beautiful land. VanKirk recounts not only the dangers of the forest in terms of poisonous snakes and blood-thirsty jaguars but does not shy away from the treacherous politics of Guatemala in the late 60's and early 70's. Jacque Van Kirk, author of the classic Remarkable Remains, is a hunting guide who is not your typical "great white hunter." He is a man of compassion and insight with a good eye for the foibles of human beings. He fills his tale with a colorful cast of characters, each one well drawn and engaging. Beyond Here Be Dragons sets the reader dreaming of far away places in the spirit of Paul Thoreau's travel books. In reading this tale of an American family hacking out a way of

life for themselves in a remote part of the world, the reader is reminded that each of us must face life head-on and slay our own breed of jaguar. A compelling, well written, funny, exciting, and inspiring book.

Just when we think we know everything we find out we know nothing. Jacques VanKirk has the ability to mesmerize you with his storytelling ability. This is a series of recollections of a family that give up all the modern world has to offer to gain everything the world can offer in a jungle environment. Companionship, love, family, responsibility, danger and excitement. Is there anything else?

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