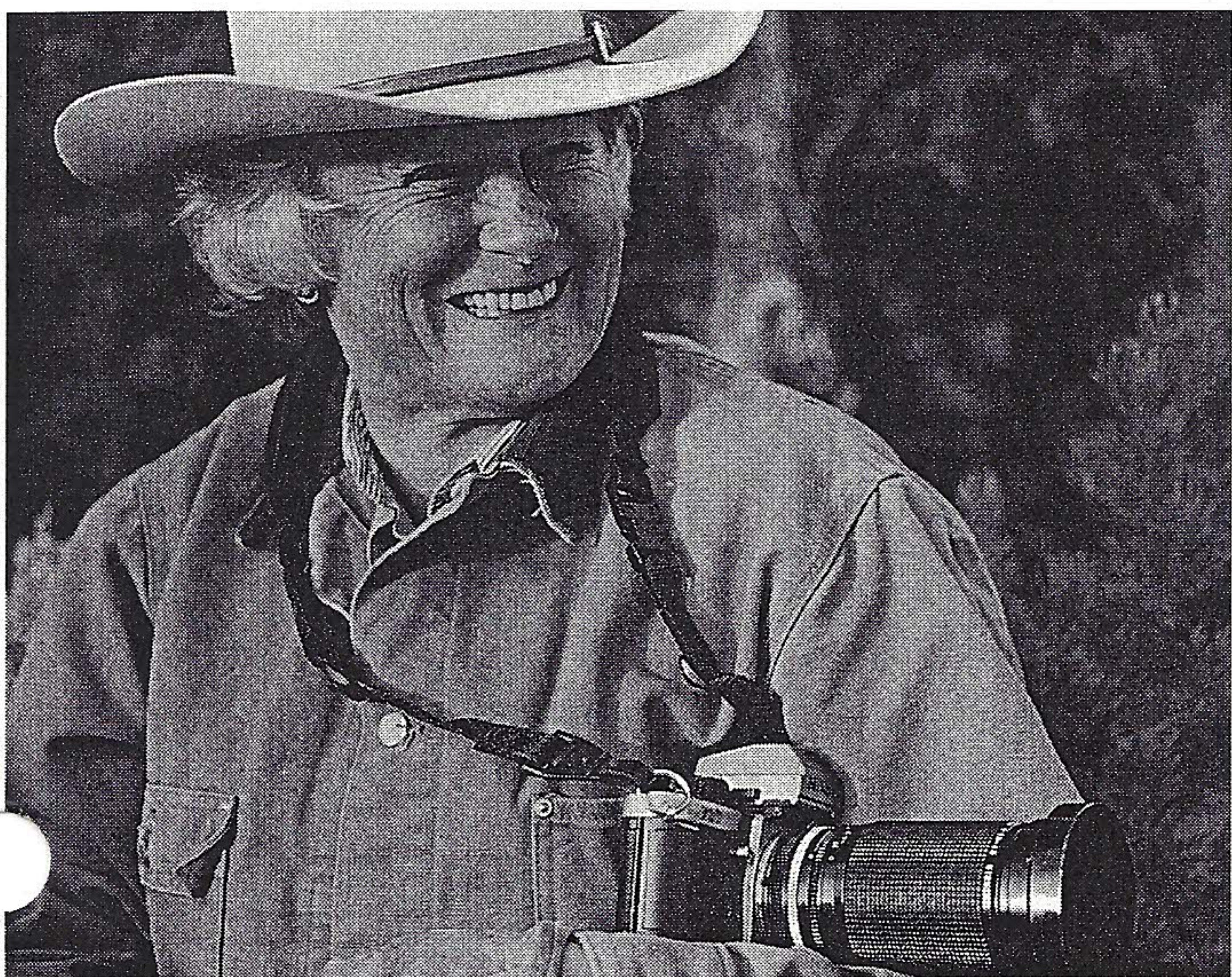


BARBARA VAN CLEVE



The lessons Barbara Van Cleve learned growing up in the beauty of a remote Montana homestead have lasted her whole life. As a child, she would rise with the sun at the break of a bitterly cold winter day and do the chores that needed doing. She still remembers her father's voice on those bone-numbing mornings. "I know you're cold. I know you're hungry. I know it's hard work. But I need you out here, so you better just start to see the beauty in it." He taught me that.

Van Cleve has built a career of seeing the beauty of her native landscape—the crystalline clouds building before a downpour, a shimmering snowfield, the graceful flow of a herd of horses galloping into the sunset. Raised on the ranch her family settled shortly after Custer's Last Stand, she has spent a lifetime roaming the Western landscape, mostly mounted on a favorite horse, her Nikons

tucked beneath her fleece jacket. She uses this vantage to gain access to the stunning scenery and rugged lives of her friends and neighbors who hang tenaciously to a dying way of life.

"I think a part of what I'm trying to do is to show that these are wonderful human beings," says Van Cleve, "who are engaged in a very tough way of life that doesn't pay—unless you're lucky enough to have one of those black-gold pumpers in the back yard. These are real human beings who care about their families, who care about their country, who have high moral standards. Their handshake is as good as the tightest contract you could ever have a lawyer write."

Photography has given Van Cleve the power to capture the beauty that has defined her life. She loves the fact that she can apprehend a slice of time, and render it for other people to see and enjoy. She loves sharing a

lifestyle that most people would otherwise never see. "There aren't too many people anymore running that many head of horses," she sighs. "There aren't many ranchers moving them across foothills and rough country the way we do. One of the greatest thrills in life, bar none, is galloping alongside a bunch of horses, fifty or sixty or a hundred head, with the wind in your face, surrounded by that kind of country and seeing the horses laid out with their tails in the air. There's nothing quite like it.

"I love the perspective from a horse," she continues. "Because I'm built pretty close to the ground, the horse becomes my tripod. My father, with whom I spent a great deal of time in the outdoors working with horses, taught me to appreciate and love them."

Take a look at Van Cleve's photograph titled *Tough Traveling*, which is certainly a fitting title for the life she has made for herself. It was captured on the family ranch on a crisp January day where the thermometer hadn't yet reached zero degrees. Van Cleve was out with her sister, hunting for wayward bulls. Her sister was on a good horse called Pinch, named after Pinch Hannon, a local old timer. They were both bundled up against the cold—but still, below zero is below zero. "I don't feel like I'm romanticizing this lifestyle," Van Cleve says. "It's very hard for a horse, to say nothing of a human being, to try to walk on crusted, hard drifted snow. But there's a beauty in it too, and that's really what I'm trying to show in my photographs."

"And I just can't help it," Van Cleve sums up. "When you're born on the land, and you have a family history, and you've lived your life out in nature—I'll always love that land and our landscape. My darkroom is in Santa Fe, which is a good base for printing photos in winter for my books and the galleries who represent my work. But when spring comes I know I'll be back in Montana, back in the saddle shooting pictures. I really have the best of all possible worlds." —David Best

■ PRINT INFORMATION

Gelatin silver: mounted on archival board, numbered, titled, stamped and signed. Sizes: 16x20, 20x24, 20x30, and 30x40, all within a limited edition of 125. Prices: \$650, rising to \$7,000 as edition sells.
Iris prints: hinged and matted, numbered, titled, stamped and signed. Sizes: 16x20, 20x24, 20x30, and 30x40, all within a limited edition of 135. Prices: \$600, rising to \$8,000 as edition sells.