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Review of *The Line from Here to There: A Storyteller's Scottish West Texas* By Rosanna Taylor Herndon

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The Line from Here to There: A Storyteller's Scottish West Texas. By Rosanna Taylor Herndon. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2008. xiv + 133 pp. \$24.95.

Memoirs are very popular these days, and this is a good one. Rosanna Taylor Herndon, a retired communications professor from Hardin-Simmons University and a professional storyteller, combines her storytelling with a collection of eighteen anecdotes about her Scottish family members in West Texas primarily during the Great Depression. She reveals the poverty people endured and the compassion they exhibited toward one another and

others in similar situations. Each story comprises a unique setting, character development, and action regarding life during that time in the southern Great Plains.

Among the examples Herndon offers is "The Panhandle Is Coming," which recounts the 1930s drought in West Texas as the family does laundry on Mondays. After the clothes are hung out to dry, an approaching cloud of red dust could often be seen. Mother and children would rush to remove the wet laundry off the clothesline, sometimes getting it safely into the house and sometimes not. In the latter case, instead of ironing on Tuesday, the laundry had to be rewashed, a backbreaking and daylong labor. The mother, to conserve dirty wash water, pours it on the roots of trees and shrubs in the yard, attempting to keep the plants alive. Clean, freshwater was too precious for such use.

The family's home had some unusually fine stonework. In later years Herndon realized that the Scottish stonemason who did the work was repaying a debt. When he nearly lost his masonry business during the Great Depression, the author's father lent him money, which the father knew the stonemason could not repay. With his dignity intact, the stonemason "worked off his debt for more than it was worth."

One of the memoir's many touching scenes involves the author's paternal grandmother who was out of bed by 4:00 a.m., spending hours tending to her cows, chickens, and enormous garden. The granddaughter, puzzled by the garden's huge size, did not realize until later that her grandmother, who invited a half dozen poor widows to her house frequently to sit on the porch in the evenings and sew, was actually helping to support them by sending them home with vegetables, baked bread, milk, and butter.

By focusing on such vivid personal examples, Herndon offers a most useful microcosm of life on the south Great Plains some seventy years ago.

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