

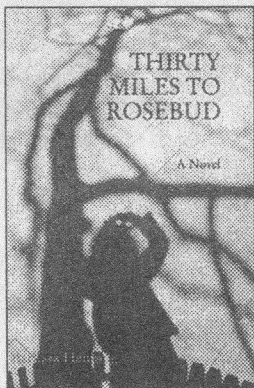
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Writing of moral issues, hippies and humor

Thirty Miles to Rosebud
by Barbara Henning

From Bohemian New York to the arid Southwest with a stop in Marquette, *Thirty Miles to Rosebud* tells the story of a woman looking for her childhood best friend with the intent to return to her some belongings she has been carrying around for decades.

During the Vietnam era, Katie and her boyfriend ran away from the U.P. to go to New York, where Katie's friend, Peggy, already was living. Katie promised to bring a box with her that belonged to Peggy's mother, and which required breaking into Peggy's trailer to retrieve. But when Katie got to New York, Peggy had left already, and for decades, Katie has been trying to locate her. Along the way, Katie's boyfriend leaves her, and she embarks on many different experiences, living in places around the world. However, the novel focuses on a summer when she travels back to Marquette to look for Peggy, and finally learns her friend lives in the Southwest.



Katie is an aging hippy, remarking at one point that psychedelics have changed her so she can see three dimensions, more than most people, and also she has a wound in her, probably from losing her mother while young, that inhibits her love-making. She has a couple of men interested in her, but she goes back and forth regarding whether she's interested in having a man in her life. She feels unable to settle down and invents her life with each decision she makes. The book reads like an epilogue to the writings of the beat generation and the 1970s, showing that generation in the present day. Hippies or not, Katie's journey is one most readers will relate to as they continue to search for happiness and meaning, not quite discontented, but still searching.

The title's reference is to the film *Citizen Kane* and its famous sled, Rosebud, the only thing the film's main character seemed to love. As Katie remarks, "Maybe home is the end and the beginning of the cycle, a rose painted on a sled or the lilac bush my mother planted." Katie never reaches "Rosebud" since it's not a place, but perhaps more a state of mind—like nirvana, part of the Eastern mysticism Katie explores—and always just around the next curve in the road.

While Katie may not have a clear path to her life, her desire to find Peggy drives her during the novel. It's not giving too much away to say she does ultimately find her

friend, but that discovery leads to some rather unexpected results, and it is important to remember often it is the journey, not the arrival that matters. Readers will find themselves interested in following Katie's journey partly because she is not tied to a specific goal or need. As she explains, "I like not knowing where I'm going next or how long I'll be here."

For people searching, answers may not be found here, but they'll find a companion to travel with in these pages, and leave a bit more hopeful or contented as they arrive at least thirty miles from Rosebud.

—Tyler Tichelaar

Editor's Note: Tichelaar is the author of The Marquette Trilogy. All books reviewed in this column are available in local and online bookstores.

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