

Return to the River

"If one has to die, I should think November would be the best month for it. It is a gray, stormy month; the salmon are dying, and the year is done. I should think there is nothing very bad about dying except for the people one has to leave and the things one hasn't had time to do. When the time comes, if I know what it's all about, I suppose I shall think, among other things, of the fish I haven't caught and the places I haven't fished."—from *A River Never Sleeps*.

RODERICK LANGMERE HAIG-BROWN died in Campbell River, Canada, on October 9, 1976, at the age of 68. When he came to British Columbia from Britain almost fifty years ago, he brought with him the perception and personal resources that made him one of North America's best angling writers. He was a provincial court judge for 33 years, Chancellor of the University of Victoria, and served on the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission. He was also the author of 24 books on a wide variety of subjects.

His angling books are filled with an honest love and understanding of the outdoors. Best known of these books is *A River Never Sleeps*, published in 1946. Others have followed and have captured the imagination of hundreds of thousands of readers, such as *Return to the River*, *Fisherman's Spring*, *Fisherman's Summer*, *Fisherman's Fall* and *Fisherman's Winter*; all of them have been recently reprinted by Crown Publishers, Inc.

"I have never yet seen a river that I could not love," he writes in *A River Never Sleeps*. "Moving water, even in a pipeline or a flume, has a fascinating vitality. It has power and grace and associations. It has a thousand colors and a thousand shapes, yet it follows laws so definite that the tiniest streamlet is an exact replica of a great river. This has always been important to me." And so Haig-Brown takes you close to thousands of shapes and colors, close to the power and grace and associations given by any stream, and it becomes important to you as you learn to love a river under Haig-Brown's perceptive guidance.

He can take you close to the gentle flow of the Frome, the chalkstream he fished as a boy in Dorset, England, where he first learned of trout and mayflies. Or close to a wilderness American stream where he catches Dolly Varden trout and has a day's catch stolen by an insistent bear. Or to the British Columbia's Nimpkish or to



Roderick L.
Haig-Brown

his own Campbell River, where heavy waters and hard-fighting salmon and steelhead taxed an angler's strength and skill to the utmost.

Haig-Brown is always true to time and place. And it is his honesty that becomes ultimately most important; it is a *real* love and a *real* understanding that he expresses. The natural wonder of the changing seasons, the sense of passing time and its effect on nature is always woven into his work. It is done with sensitivity, and never maudlin—this is Haig-Brown's distinctive mark; where he succeeds and most writers fail. Reality is never slighted, there is no false escapism, but rather a return to the "laws so definite" that provide harmony between man and nature, and which are the melodies within his books. CRAIG WOODS