

Dan Branch

Review of *Someday I'll Miss This Place Too* by Alaska writer laureate, Nancy Lord

Dan Branch, “ignorant but lucky,” turned what began as a one-year lawyering commitment in Bethel, Alaska into a lifetime of learning, adventure, compassion, and reflection upon what makes a “good” life. His memoir in essays provides a fascinating personal and historical record of western Alaska in the 1970s and ‘80s. While much of what he experienced as lawyer and magistrate is heart-breaking, Branch balances his account with admiration for those he learned from, humility for his own missteps, and a big-hearted sense of humor.

—Nancy Lord, former Alaska writer laureate and author of *Fishcamp*, *Beluga Days*, and *pH: A Novel*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Before he moved to Bethel, Alaska in 1976, Dan Branch was more likely to watch TV than produce stuff for other people to read. The one poem he wrote for his high school prom date almost ended their relationship. The teacher running his high school newspaper fired him a month into the semester. Another

said that his word usage was so bad, he'd have to take one writing class each college semester if he wanted to get an office job after graduation. He followed that advice, which probably helped him gain acceptance by a California law school.

Branch took a VISTA lawyer job in Bethel, which at the time had a decent library and a recently created public television station. Fearing insane-producing boredom, he brought with him an almost complete set of Russian classics. Between reading Tolstoy and working his law job, he started to journal. He lived in Bethel and Aniak for over 13 years before moving to Southeast Alaska.

During the past 25 years he has written over 100 columns for *The Alaska Bar Rag*, an Alaska Bar Association journal. He sold 24 articles to *The Anchorage Daily News*, including pieces about a Ketchikan's grave digger, a chief on one of the Alaska Marine Highway ships, and a man who managed a remote salmon hatchery in Southeast Alaska. He has rarely received much attention for his legal work or nonfiction writing. But once, one of his legal opinions was reported in newspapers in Alaska and the Lower 48 States because in it he declared it illegal for charities to raise money by running race races.

After retirement, Branch obtained an MFA degree from the University of Anchorage, Alaska. Recently *Cirque Press* published a book of his non-fiction pieces called, *Someday I'll Miss This Place Too*. You can buy a copy from *Amazon*.