

# C Contents

CHAPTER ONE	
Origins of an Odyssey .....	8
CHAPTER TWO	
Sky Road to Adventure .....	20
CHAPTER THREE	
Rising on the High Plains .....	30
CHAPTER FOUR	
Flying the Missouri Breaks .....	52
CHAPTER FIVE	
Threshold of the Rockies .....	72
CHAPTER SIX	
Challenge of the Mountains .....	86
CHAPTER SEVEN	
Descent Into the Unknown .....	98
CHAPTER EIGHT	
Columbia River Passage to the Sea .....	116
CHAPTER NINE	
Homeward Bound: Then and Now .....	136
CHAPTER TEN	
In the Red-Haired Doctor's Town .....	154



*Near Glendive, Montana*

# Preface

*In June 2003 we set out across America in a green “canoe in the sky” to retrace the journey of Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery. We modern-day adventurers—a pilot/photographer and a pilot/writer—traveled in a homebuilt, open-cockpit airplane, navigating our way over great cities and mighty rivers. The winds of the western plains had their go at us. The high mountain passes dared us to cross. We began our trip from a soggy, rain-soaked St. Louis, and by the time we returned three months later, we had logged more than 14,000 miles and nearly 200 hours in the cockpit of the slow-flying Cloud Chaser.*

*From our aerial platform, Ron Lowery photographed some of the most beautiful terrain in the world. We lifted off before sunrise, sometimes from a rugged dirt strip, to witness the play of first light on rivers, on rugged mountains and canyons, on cliffs and ocean beaches. We floated for hours over fields of grain and reveled in the abundance of the land. Our versatile little plane climbed high enough for the camera to capture the form and function of landscapes and low enough to let us smell the mud in the rivers and the flax in the fields.*

*Following the trail of history proved to be a great way to structure an adventure. We found traces of the epic explorers on riverbanks and the Pacific shore. Best of all, we found Americans celebrating their past while designing a future filled with hope.*

*Ron challenged himself to create ever more perfect compositions from his nimble airborne tripod. In my role as writer, I knocked on doors and gave myself license to ask innumerable questions. We found ways to enter the lives of people of all heritages and occupations—natives and settlers, fishermen and cropduster pilots.*

*Our journey has rewarded us with a wealth of memories and a profound love for our country and its people. We hope this story of our odyssey will open doors of adventure and wonder for everyone who reads it.*

*—Mary Walker*