



Contrabando: Confessions of a Drug-Smuggling Texas Cowboy

Don Henry Ford Jr., Charles Bowden

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Don Henry Ford, Jr. is a Texas cowboy, rancher and farmer. In the late 1970s, he was foreman of his father's ranch and farm in West Texas along the Pecos River. The ranch was going broke. The bankers were knocking at the door. Don went to his Mexican hands, the same guys who were the connection for his own marijuana--smoking inclinations, and they directed him to their contacts on the other side of the Rio Grande. Soon, he was scoring some easy money and he was hooked. For the next seven years, he made his living as an outlaw, smuggling marijuana across the U.S./Mexico border in the Big Bend region. Millions of dollars passed through his hands. He did business with many of the big-name narcotrafficantes of the era like Pablo Acosta and Amado Carrillo Fuentes. After being arrested and sent to prison, he escaped and lived for a year in rural northern Mexico, raising a bumper crop of marijuana and hiding out from the federales.

Contrabando is a confession, but it's also an homage to the Mexican paisanos and, indeed, to other outlaws north of the border who became Don Ford's friends and protectors during his seven years as a smuggler.

Charles Bowden (author of *Down by the River*, Simon & Schuster, 2003) has written a remarkable introduction to *Contrabando*, giving an historical perspective to the never-ending "war on drugs" waged by the U.S. government.

In December 1986, the feds caught Don Henry Ford a second time. He was sentenced to 15 years in a maximum security federal penitentiary. He now lives in Seguin, Texas, farming and raising race horses.

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