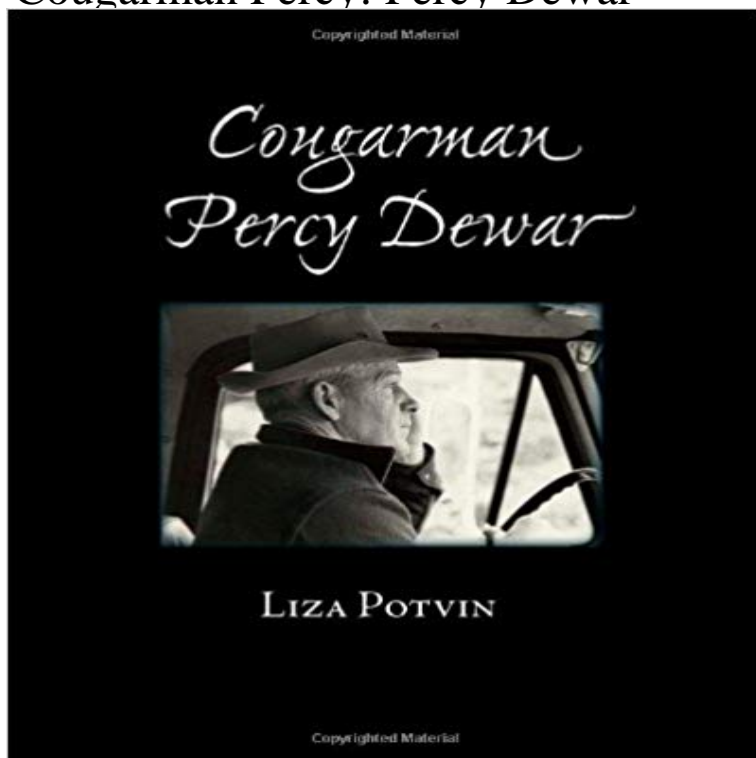


## Cougarman Percy: Percy Dewar



Vancouver Island pioneer, Percy Dewar, grandson of the legendary distiller in Scotland, was born in Extension, to a coal-mining family. Like the cougars that have exerted a lifelong fascination over him, he may be part of a dying breed on this island. From a young age, he developed a love of nature in general and of animals in particular. He began to live in the woods and hunt cougar for bounty as a teen, and developed a reputation as one of the ablest hunters on the island, although he claims he had success because he had the best hound dogs. He eventually financed his own 7-year study of cougars, living in the woods with them and tagging them so that he could follow their movements. His study proved that cougars are not territorial among many unusual findings, and disputed previous assumptions now debated by scientific researchers. Biologists have consulted Percy for many years; his knowledge of cougars is based on what he has experienced firsthand rather than on what he calls useless book learning about cougars. After the bounty ended on Vancouver Island in 1958, largely as a result of Percys study data, he experienced a change of heart and began to work actively for the conservation of cougars on the island. He began to import Akbash hounds to protect his livestock from predators, and encouraged local farmers to follow suit. As a logger and a guide, he lived all over Vancouver Island, and knows it like the back of my hand. A true renaissance man, raised on virtues of self-sufficiency, Percy built several log houses nearly single-handedly and lived as a near-recluse for the better part of his life. When he was in his eighties, Percy finally came down off the mountain in Strathcona where he was living in his sprawling log house,

complete with goat, chicken and horse barns and a greenhouse. For the first time in his life, Percy has electricity, a refrigerator, and does not need to pump his own water. What finally brought him down off his mountain? He fell in love with the petite but forceful Ilse, an eighty-something woman whom he met through his Elder-hostel tour of Strathcona, and decided it was finally time to give up his bachelor existence. Now living with her on Salt Spring Island, Percy is active in hiking, golfing, and giving talks about cougars. Recently he fought a government proposal to reinstate the bounty on cougars.

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