Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Adventures in Paradise: Memoirs of an Entrepreneur in the Yucatan
Gus Gordon
Create Space
978-1-4538-0193-2
Four Stars (out of Five)

What would it be like, as an American, to relocate to Merida, on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and operate a business? Gus Gordon did just that, and he recounts his colorful experience in *Adventures in Paradise*.

Interestingly, Gordon had no intention of starting a business in Merida; he was a professor who had accompanied business students to the city and written articles on doing business in the Yucatan. The president of a U.S. manufacturing company who wanted to move his sewing factories to Mexico contacted Gordon for advice. He was happy to help, but when the business deal started to fall through, Gordon took a chance, offering to provide the money for a small operation he and his Mexican wife would run as a kind of pilot project. The American manufacturer liked the idea—and that was the beginning of Gordon's business adventures.

Gordon spins quite a tale. He takes the reader on a journey that involves the growth of the fledgling business into a successful operation with more than five hundred employees. Along the way, Gordon tells many stories—some sad, some funny, some even astonishing—about the intriguing characters he meets in Merida and elsewhere.

But there is more to the book than quirky personalities. Gordon does an admirable job of describing Mexican culture and customs from the perspective of an outsider who has become an insider. He offers a rare glimpse at what it takes to operate a business subject to socialistic labor laws and explains why Mexican employees act differently from those in the United States. He provides a sobering overview of Mexican policies and politics and shows why bribery is a way of life there.

The reader also is exposed to what daily living is like in Merida—what people do, what people eat, and how people drive. In fact, driving in Mexico, as Gordon explains in a manner

that will have the reader laughing out loud, is a wild and wacky adventure unto itself.

There is much to like about Gus Gordon's memoir, not the least of which is the author's ability to keenly observe the differences in the way Mexico functions as a country and as a society versus the United States. While Gordon is sometimes critical of Mexico (particularly its government), he is just as capable of recognizing and praising its positive qualities. His love of the Mexican people shines through.

There are some bumps in Gordon's memoir. On occasion, the author moves too abruptly from stories about people to his narrative about his business. Every so often, unnecessarily detailed sections of the book slow down the pace. But these are minor criticisms. On the whole, Gus Gordon's *Adventures in Paradise* is an engaging book, with enough humor, pathos, and lessons learned to make it well worth reading.

Barry Silverstein