ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

ADVENTURE

Andy's Story: Too Much for a Lifetime
R. A. Lang
FriesenPress
978-1-4602-3008-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

This intelligent, resourceful globe-trotting Welshman really has had quite a ride.

In many ways, R. A. Lang has lived an ordinary enough life, full of drinks with friends, business troubles and successes, and health and relationship challenges. He isn't a brilliant scientist, movie star, or jet-setting millionaire; he started out as a plater in the oil industry. But at the same time, Lang is a remarkably fortunate man, whose skills and ambition provided him with a life of travel and adventure. He details that full and hazard-filled life in *Andy's Story: Too Much for a Lifetime*, providing a matter-of-fact account spanning the globe from Wales to Venezuela to Thailand and points between.

Lang is a conversational writer and acknowledges early on that the book might hold misspellings and grammatical errors. It's true; there are such errors throughout the book. Nevertheless, the peculiar situations in which Lang finds himself time after time tend to be engaging. He's witnessed the beginnings of public executions in Iran, faced multiple run-ins with voodoo priests in Africa and the Caribbean, got a massive tattoo after a drunken night in Thailand, swam with sharks, made his own hard alcohol in Muslim countries, and, on top of all that, became an expert sports fisherman and fell in love with a host of unstable women.

Lang genuinely seems to tell it like it is. This is refreshing because one seldom reads the autobiography of a noncelebrity. There are no preconceived notions about him, no famous court cases, historical records, or paparazzi to color the view. Instead, here is a life spread out. The problem is that real life has no plot. An accurate autobiography is an endeavor which, while laudable, makes for meandering reading. He could have benefited from a more focused, if less complete, retelling.

The book's subtitle, *Too Much for a Lifetime*, is a perfect description of why it is both fascinating and frustrating. There are several moments of emotional impact, any of which could have become the focus of an entire book. The difficulties caused by his father's gruesome

accidental death, for example, could easily have become a recurring point of reflection. Similarly, his thoughts on Apartheid and other institutionalized forms of bigotry could have been further developed. Instead, Lang tends to say what happened, somewhat bluntly, and move on to the next occurrence.

Despite the whirlwind of a life, Lang never comes across as anything but a regular middle-class Welshman, intelligent and resourceful but not particularly polished. He tells the story one anecdote after another, moving in order from one location to the next in his globe-trotting career without a lot of bragging. Instead, he seems a grateful, funny, and generally happy person, aware that he's had quite a ride.

Jason Henninger