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FOREWORD REVIEW ★★★☆☆ BIOGRAPHY

Circuits & Bumps

P.A. Condon
Trafford Publishing (December 2008)
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From the start of this engaging memoir readers are thrown into P.A. Condon's family. The author tells stories of his origins including how his middle name was chosen (the result of his drunken father's whims) and who his godfather was (a man his father met in a bar whom the family would never see again). The author does not play the pity card; life as seen through Condon's eyes is one of celebration. He is able to see the humor in every situation even his family's bankruptcy a stint in an orphanage and the terrors of war.

For those interested in pre-War London this book is a gem but the author writes just as enthusiastically about teaching as he does about war heartbreak and disillusionment. The true strength of this book is the author's experiences from his time as a pilot to the four seasons he spent in Klondike goldfields. There is no shortage of information in this memoir: It is clear that Condon has led a full life and he has risen after every bump and dive. Thus the phoenix is an appropriate section title and an apt symbol for the writer himself.

One scar in this memoir's armor is its poor organization: Condon's detail-heavy tales are overly long and the sections that divide them are too wild and too unstructured. For example the first two sections of the book focus on his mother and father's families. Each paragraph is like a new entry in a journal: characters are described and then an anecdote or two is thrown in. Though Condon's writing is crisp and engaging the slew of people he introduces can become tedious especially when the order of events is so unstructured. Condon wants to tell readers everything about himself but there are times where less really is more.

Each sketch in this piece is filled to the brim like a trunk full of family photographs heirlooms and letters. The problem with so many would-be memoirists is that they have little to say: in short their lives are boring. This is not an issue with Condon and this is why his memoir succeeds. The writing is as casual as morning coffee and readers will soon feel as though Condon is an old friend with whom they have touch.
LISA BOWER (March 3, 2009)

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