Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Flying Hung-over
Brian Oard
Xlibris
978-1-4653-7194-2
Three Stars (out of Five)

Travel provides an opportunity for author Brian Oard to reflect on life. In *Flying Hung-Over*, he describes his round-trip journey from Kansas to New York City, where he celebrates New Year's Eve and gets a hangover. His book is interspersed with observations and opinions on topics ranging from backpacks, fellow travelers, and workplace productivity to faith. It is written in stream-of-consciousness style, which is appropriate for what Oard wants to convey.

Oard comments on almost every aspect of the experience, starting with the packing of his bags. He goes on to discuss how he gets around Manhattan by foot, subway, and taxi; which parts of the city are best to explore; and the challenges of getting a seat in a bar with an unobstructed view of the television. In telling his stories, Oard makes reference to the ethnic background of one of the baggage handlers and one of the families in a bar. Recognizing that some may view this singling out as racist, he defends his descriptions, but his arguments are not convincing.

Oard's segue to his view on faith is offered by the anxiety he observes in his fellow passengers—what if the plane goes down? The author revisits the topic of faith again and again throughout the book.

Both the title of the book and the back cover description are misleading. Oard's hangover seems to have little impact on his return flight, and the entire trip goes smoothly with no delays. While readers may find common ground in some of Oard's travel observations, there is little that is unique or special about his trip to New York City.

It would have been interesting to learn a bit more about Oard. For example, how does a small-town guy from Middle America end up on a party boat on the Hudson River for New Year's Eve? He mentions being unmarried by choice, and he hints at family, but he doesn't share much about either subject.

The book needs some editing, even though the stream-of-consciousness style usually defies standard editing practices. Spelling errors and word misuse are distracting. For instance, New York City is composed of boroughs, not "bureaus," as Oard refers to them. His run-on sentences, while common in this style of writing, ramble on so long that their meaning is lost.

The title and cover of *Flying Hung-Over* will catch the eye. As to the story itself, readers will chuckle at some of the author's observations, be infuriated by others, and may pause thoughtfully at the rest.

Mary Cary Crawford