ForeWord Reviews

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

High
Brian O'Dea
Brian ODea
Other Press
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Brian ODea was living a straight, peaceful, and somewhat productive life when he was arrested in Santa Barbara, California; his past had finally caught up with him. *HIGH* is ODeas story of his life as a drug smuggler extraordinaire, which he tells in a straightforward and unapologetic style.

This story is noteworthy because of the size of ODeas smuggling network and the amount of money it generated. ODea had 120 people working in a coast-to-coast operation. Semi-trucks traversed the United States carrying cedar shingles as cover for the actual product: marijuana and cocaine. Product-$100 million worth of it-was brought into the country by ships which were either owned or chartered by the network. ODea rejoices about how he and his cohorts outwitted the DEA and other governmental agencies but expresses no regret about the financial gains they won by exploiting others.

ODea also describes his own drug use and addiction and attributes it to his early abuse by a priest. He seems hell-bent to destroy himself throughout the book, and tells of his recklessness during his years of trafficking. On one mission, he flew as co-pilot in a DC-6 even though he had never before sat in the cockpit of a plane. Ultimately, the plane crashed and tons of marijuana were lost, but his life was spared.

The story continues after his arrest with his life in prison. He gets by because of his connections with underworld characters who had been an integral part of his criminal life.

This book provides a look into the seamy life of drug smuggling. This reviewer would have preferred to hear ODea recognize the impact of his life on others, or express some remorse for his actions. Prison terms meted out for breaking drug laws sometimes seem to be excessive. However, considering the amount of money and marijuana involved, and the addiction of so many people, this reviewer thinks that some sentences are not stringent enough.

Clark Isaacs