Clarion Review

Biography

How Faith Works: Cancer Survivor
Matt Davis
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Matt Davis hails from hardscrabble rural Alabama not far from Murder Creek. The account of his early years confirms stereotypes about a place with more bigotry than indoor plumbing. Beginning as he did there is little reason to expect that he might grow into a kind man who is capable of finding joy in life but this story stresses the positive wherever possible.

It is a marvel that he survived at all nourished on skunk and goat sandwiches drinking cowflop tea. When Davis' car catches his face and hands on fire three white men who never heard the Good Samaritan fable sit by watching him burn refusing to offer assistance. Later the local hospital turns him away. He reaches in between floorboards one day and rips his finger off: "When I found my finger it was grimy with filthy dirt that had been under the house for hundreds of years."

It seems that giving up early would make a lot of sense but Davis' spirit is never broken no matter what the adversity. He is in the habit of creating optimistic slogans which he repeats as needed folksy lines such as: "You may go down hard but you don't have to lose your ice cream."

The adult years still feature financial setbacks and health threats including the most disastrous prostate exam of all times but he keeps seeking opportunities. A notable interest in later years is the promotion of universal education. He candidly confesses a few moral failings and shows class by crediting an ex-wife for sacrifices made while raising children.

The title *How Faith Works* creates the expectation of much talk on the practical mechanics of religion. Although Davis often states that it's good to have faith in God that's about as far as the theology goes. His message is really about an unwavering commitment to optimism.

There is a blue ribbon zucchini on the back cover grown from a seed that lay in the ground dormant for two years. He sees the growth of the vegetable as a result of faith and takes

it on a multi-city tour telling his story of hardship overcome: “I sat down in front of the building at Channel 3 with the zucchini on my lap while trying to make contact with someone from the media.”

For the record Davis’ impossible-to-overlook zucchini comes in at ten pounds and is twenty inches long. *How Faith Works* executes pretty well eschewing the stuffy self-congratulatory tone common to autobiography. Readers will laugh at some passages and feel their heartstrings tugged at others. Matt Davis has lived a worthwhile life and at age seventy-five he’s still eagerly writing another chapter.

Todd Mercer