ForeWord Reviews
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BIOGRAPHY

Race to the Sea: The Autobiography of a Marine Biologist
Dayton L. Alverson
iUniverse
978-0-595-48680-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

Huck Finn in Hawaii bread wagons "Rice Paddy Navy" cage girls high seas drama the KGB political moles cultural nuances: these comprise some of the more intriguing elements that the author has woven into his life's story.

One can easily separate this book into three significant parts. The first involves the author's childhood especially his experiences living amongst the natives on remote Hilo Island in pre-World War II Hawaii. The second details his adventures as a SACO Tiger a member of an elite U.S. Naval radio intelligence unit that was created deep in occupied China to intercept and decode Japanese radio messages during World War II. The third and the most lengthy of the three parts describes the author's professional career first as a research marine biologist then as a government administrator and lastly as a private marine life consultant who globe-trotted across the earth's waters sharing his expertise.

The author Dayton L. Alverson PhD has been widely published in the marine sciences field both on a technological and a policy-making basis. He has been a pioneer in advocating global fisheries conservation through the use of scientific principles rather than political policy-making.

Alverson paints a vivid picture of the difficult and dangerous life that the commercial fisherman undertakes to satisfy the seafood diner. Although he is highly educated Alverson admits that he learned more about fisheries and fish biology in five days working on a commercial fishing trawler than in two years in the classroom. But the author's most treasured moments occurred during his childhood in Hawaii (or as he puts it his "Adventures in Paradise") and during the war near the River of Nine Dragons in Japanese-occupied China.

The book’s title subtitle synopsis and the illustrations on both covers send mixed messages about the book’s subject matter. In actuality only one-half of the book covers the author’s career as a marine biologist. Incorporating the author’s childhood and war year themes in the title would give readers a more balanced view of the book’s content.

At times the detailed descriptions of Alverson’s professional career are too long and technical to sustain readers’ attention. Tightening some of the personal asides would have kept the chronology moving at a faster clip and including more pictures and using maps to depict the author’s worldwide travels would have made the written content more expressive.

The author writes with such a focus on the human element that this book is not just the story of a marine biologist but also Alverson’s insights into history and culture. Most autobiographies are by the rich and famous: this author is neither but he has had some very interesting and exceptional experiences.