Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Snick: A Very Colourful Piece of Australiana
Michael Schneider
BookSurge
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Suppose, through your own doing, such as giving a "copper a smack in the gob," you find yourself doing "a six month holiday at the Queen's expense" in an Australian prison and another prisoner makes an improper advance. According to Michael Schneider, who has lived the wild and wooly Down Under and is an expert in such matters, "it is well worth the loss of priveldges [sic] for a week to deck the first bloke that touches you on the arse" to gain the respect of other inmates.

And so it goes in *Snick* (titled after Schneider's nickname), the tale of a social misfit from Adelaide who has gone through life decking people—a teacher, a shop foreman, and a superior in the Navy, to name a few. It's a primer of sorts on how to get by in Australia—with tips that the tourism brochures don't hint at—and have "a [expletive deleted] ball doing it."

The grammar may be bad, the spelling worse, and the chronology confusing, but Schneider makes no apologies; he asserts that his education was a "disaster." To his credit, he offers no moral to be made from his story unless it's that if you're true to your code, however self serving, and buy a round when it's your turn, you'll have a lot of "mates" along the way.

Crocodile Dundee would blush at some of Schneider's language, but he explains, "if a yarn is to be told it must be told properly." Perhaps he has a point. After all, if you hunt crocodiles (as he actually did), harpoon whales, bear the boredom of an automobile assembly line or the dangers of a timber mill, the conversation is not genteel.

Schneider couches most of his adventures and hardships in humor, but there is an undercurrent of sadness at times. A wife left him, taking the children with her, and he loved the Navy, but an untamed temper made him unfit for service.

In recent years, he has settled down, in a relative way, with another wife and family. No more madcap motorcycle trips, no more month-long crawls. He credits his wife Sandie with

lending stability to his life. It was she who showed him a picture of outdoor furniture “made out of scrub, the Yanks call it stick furniture.” That led to his making items to sell at Medieval Fairs and a steady income.

But still, every once in a while, old mates like Old Grizz, Brian, Fitzy, or Crewy show up and, well, you can figure what happens. It’s “Beer O’clock!” all over again.

Thomas BeVier