Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Three Sisters Ponds: My Journey from Street Cop to FBI Special Agent--from Baltimore to Lockerbie, Pakistan and Beyond

Phillip B. J. Reid
AuthorHouse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Workmanlike and modest, Lockerbie bombing investigator offers an intriguing tale of what life as an FBI agent is really like.

When Phillip B. J. Reid says he is "truly proud of the success [he] had as a black law enforcement officer," he is being honest but also modest. His memoir, *Three Sisters Ponds*, is an inspiring story of a man who fought dyslexia, struggled to complete his education, and went on to serve his city and country with distinction. From Baltimore street cop patrolling a beat to a top FBI agent traveling the world and uncovering terrorist plots, Reid's story is that of a man who lived "the American Dream," all while making the world a little safer.

The opening chapters are entertaining and charming, as they provide an engaging look back at Baltimore in the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s. While there are a few smiles to be found here about Reid's youth and early days as a policeman, there are also cautionary tales, for as this ex-cop admits, when he joined the force the Baltimore Police Department was "among the nation's most antiquated and corrupt." Reid did all the jobs a city cop should, although his most memorable incidents seem to be those involving a naked dancing woman and what he calls a "Keystone Cops" mishap when his cruiser rolled down a hill, bouncing off other cars.

Once Reid leaves Baltimore to join the FBI, there is very little humor to be found. The two chapters about training with the FBI are informative but dry. Things become a bit more lively when Reid arrives in New York City and joins the FBI SWAT team, but it's not until the midpoint of the book that the story really starts rocking and rolling—when Reid is assigned to investigate the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

This case consumes Reid's career for the next dozen years, and while his description of the legwork involved is not exciting, Reid's accounts of the investigation show what actually goes on in such a case. He provides clear, concise, and workmanlike reporting on his role in tracking down those who robbed a Brink's armored car in New York, took Americans and other foreigners hostage in the Himalayas, or tried to run guns and smuggle cash to Iran, Libya, and the terror groups those nations supported.

Reid's book is mostly about his law enforcement service, but it is also part family memoir and travelogue. His very human remembrances of Hawaii will ring true with any who have ever visited what he dubs "paradise with a caveat." Smiles will arise from his fish-out-of-water experiences in Alaska, where a poor black kid from the Baltimore suburbs winds up in a "log cabin with mounted moose heads, bearskin rugs with heads still intact, and various species of salmon and other fish mounted over the large fireplace."

Three Sisters Ponds: My Journey from Street Cop to FBI Special Agent—from Baltimore to Lockerbie, Pakistan and Beyond, is everything the author promises it to be on the front and back covers. As in any true story, it has its amusing and exciting chapters, as well as its mundane ones. Reid's memoir is a worthwhile read for anyone curious about what life in law enforcement is truly like.

Mark McLaughlin