ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Two Seeing Eye Dogs Take Manhattan...a love story
Lloyd Burlingame
CreateSpace
978-1-4774-4602-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

Dog lovers will enjoy this lively book about two seeing eye dogs assigned, successively, to a retired Manhattan professor. Any reader curious about how a blind person partners with their canine companion will also appreciate this privileged peek. But highly imaginative readers, who love the idea of a memoir "written" by animals, will most delight in this romp through the ruminations of two working dogs.

Lloyd Burlingame lost his sight at the pinnacle of a successful career as a designer for stage and opera, as well as the long-time head of New York University's Department of Design. He didn't consider a guide dog until an incident with a cruel stranger had him doubting his white cane. He soon called The Seeing Eye, an organization headquartered across the river in New Jersey. Fourteen years, two dogs, and countless insights later, he set down some of his experiences in his first book, with everything relayed through the eyes and minds of his Labradors. This conceit takes a bit of getting used to, but delivers a rich, often comical perspective, such as when the pair encounters an elevator for the first time, or an escalator, subway, theater, or fitness gym.

The first half of the book is narrated by Hickory, who is two years old when partnered with Burlingame, after a one-month trial at The Seeing Eye's suburban campus. These early sections, which provide insight into the initial training period for both dog and human, are some of the best parts of the book. Following chapters, which chronicle the pair's six years together in Manhattan—with its accompanying traffic, noise, distractions, and rich cultural life—also shine.

Together, Hickory and the "Old Prof" attend classical music and opera performances in New York's famed venues, manage storms and city construction, mark birthdays, overcome trivial and major problems, and share the tedium and joy of everyday life. They grow, inevitably, to love and depend on one another in the most symbiotically charged way. As a prose writer with an eye for detail and nuance, Hickory knows how to move a story along. He strikes a pleasing balance between keen intellectual observer and kind friend, and he adds just the right

amount of carefree playfulness.

When retirement looms for Hickory, and Burlingame is matched with Kemp, the book swerves a bit like a puppy who can't decide which of his toys is the most fun to chew. The second half of *Two Seeing Eye Dogs Take Manhattan* is a series of admittedly imaginative e-mails between the two dogs, between Kemp and the couple who adopted Hickory in retirement, and between Hickory and the Old Prof. But since Kemp's voice is fine on its own, the contrived epistolary construction creates a bit of a distraction.

On balance, other than being a bit on the long side, there are few bones to pick in this touching tale.

Lisa Romeo