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GENERAL

Unresolved Issues
Ronald Gauge
Trafford Publishing
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Four Stars (out of Five)

From small-town police departments to federal agency politics and personality conflicts, *Unresolved Issues* covers it all. Ronald Gauge's murder mystery involves crime, powerful people, science, current issues and the criminal justice system.

Paul Louis Thibideaux "Thib," a divorced father of two nearly grown daughters, has recently retired from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). He is enjoying life in his new California desert home, when he receives a call from his old buddy Peter Ketlinski, who saved Thib's life in Vietnam. Ketlinski is now mayor of the small fictional town of San Timoteo. Ketlinski begs Thib to take on a temporary assignment as chief of police after four of his town's five officers have been fired.

Eighteen months into Thib's tenure as police chief, a woman's body is discovered in a stolen Mercedes along the riverbank. Officer Jason Lee is first on the scene: "Jason walked behind the big car and opened the left passenger door. Reaching in, he pushed the trench coat collar away from the woman's face, intending to feel for a pulse. As his fingers touched her skin, Jason knew there would be no pulse. The woman was cold—very cold." Thib's instincts tell him there's more to this crime than meets the eye.

It takes eighteen months to discover the identity of the dead woman. When she turns out to be the daughter of a powerful politician, the Los Angeles police department and the FBI want to take over the investigation. Thib sets the rules and antagonizes both parties. He has a murder to solve, and he has to deal with the fact that the victim was kidnapped when she was a college student twenty years earlier.

Filled with police procedure, *Unresolved Issues* offers a glimpse into the painstaking details of a criminal investigation. The author served as a marine in Vietnam and a police officer for four years. He also worked for twenty-plus years in federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of the Treasury, ATF, the Secret Service, and the U.S. Customs Service.

In *Unresolved Issues*, Gauge calls on his police background to give readers a mystery

filled with suspense and plenty of true-to-life, crime-solving techniques. The book is long, at 610 pages, but it's easy to get involved in the story. Gauge writes with a strong sense of voice and characterization. The plot flows smoothly. Although it takes a substantial part of the book to identify the victim, the reader shares the frustration that Thib and his officers experience as they follow leads and run into one dead end after another.

Pat McGrath Avery