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My Life with Bonnie and Clyde (review)

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protection for the copper mining industry, and for the restoration of veterans' benefits. Although her close relationship with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt at times limited her independence, Greenway was not a "rubber stamp" for all New Deal legislation. She easily won re-election in 1934, and labored long hours in support of Social Security, rural electrification, and various public works projects. Exhausted after completing her first full term in office, Greenway opted not to seek re-election in 1936.

While Miller's laudatory treatment of Isabella Greenway is at times overdone, the book reveals a complex woman who, while pampered, self-absorbed, and a bit ditzzy, was also altruistic, shrewd, and exceptionally hard working. Well written and researched (Miller uses a broad array of personal papers, letters, diaries, and photos), the book provides a cogent history of "an enterprising" but heretofore obscure woman at a critical juncture in American history. It should be well received by scholars and general readers interested in the dynamic role that women played in the development of the twentieth-century southwest.

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THOMAS A. BRITTEN

My Life with Bonnie and Clyde. By Blanche Caldwell Barrow. Edited by John Neal Phillips. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. Pp. 374. Foreword, editor's preface, chronology, afterword, illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 08061326251. \$29.95, cloth.)

Blanche Caldwell was a starry-eyed young girl when she married a twice-divorced petty hoodlum named Buck Barrow. The two parlayed their relationship with Bonnie and Clyde into their graves. Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker gained notoriety during a three-year crime spree at the height of the Great Depression that left ten men dead, most of them law officers. After serving time for a two-bit crime, Buck Barrow—Clyde's older brother—received a pardon from Texas Gov. Ma Ferguson. This opened the way for Buck and his new bride to escape a life of crime and settle down. But Buck remained a criminal at heart and soon joined Bonnie and Clyde in a series of bank robberies, petty thefts, and killings and a life on the run. The result was that Buck Barrow was shot to death in an escape attempt and Blanche Caldwell Barrow became a young widow behind bars.

While in prison, Blanche wrote a memoir about her time with the Barrow gang. The handwritten document went unpublished for sixty-five years. In 2000, the executor of Blanche's estate, her friend Esther Weiser, found the memoir in a stack of papers in her garage that she was about to throw out. She instead contacted John Neal Phillips, the author of *Running with Bonnie and Clyde: The Ten Fast Years of Ralph Fufts* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), who agreed to edit the brief journal into a book.

Phillips proclaims that the intent of Blanche's writing was to help young girls avoid getting mixed up with a life of crime. He also freely admits that the manuscript is not an objective account. The editor concludes, however, that it is the memoir's very subjectivity that gives it "a sense of gritty reality" (p. xix).

The reality is that Blanche's memoir cannot stand on its own. Phillips relied on 407 footnotes covering seventy-three pages of annotations to supplement and correct Blanche's story. Additionally, he had a twenty-page editor's introduction and chronology, a fifty-page conclusion, numerous pages of explanations, maps, sketches, photos, and period background.

The reality also is that the memoir is filled with lamentations about Buck and Blanche's innocence and drooling about Blanche's love for her man. But most of Blanche's points do not hold up when examined against the objective record. While every other page includes an expression of Blanche's love for Buck, months after his death she was already involved with a romantic interest while in prison. At one point, Blanche describes what she was wearing when Buck was killed. "We had used my skirt for bandages. Everything was covered in blood" (p. 132). A photo of her capture (p. 134) showed her wearing pants instead of a skirt and no blood was visible on her. One thing Blanche did get right was her assessment of her brother-in-law Clyde Barrow; "Clyde was too much of a dirty rat" (p. 109).

Pflugerville

ALFREDO E. CARDENAS

The One and Only Rattlesnake Bomber Base: Pyote Army Airfield in World War II. By Thomas E. Alexander. (Abilene: State House Press, 2005. Pp. 216. Acknowledgments, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1880510901. \$18.95, paper.)

After enjoying the author's two *The Stars Were Big and Bright* books (2000, 2001: Eakin Press), about Army airfields in Texas during World War II, and his *The Wings of Change*, looking at the broad impact of military aviation on the state (2003), I looked forward to this book about Pyote. I was not disappointed. After introducing us to the Rattlesnake bomber base in Volume I of *The Stars Were Big and Bright*, the current study first reviews the boom and bust cycles of the city of Pyote. As was the experience of many small towns throughout the United States, locating a military installation nearby brought significant change, and this book is as much a sociological study as it is a military history. While the base had an important training mission during World War II, the story of the larger impact on the life and fortunes of the town and its people is even more important to the author.

The book takes an in-depth look at the politics and intrigue involved at locating the base in Pyote, the base's contributions during World War II as a training center for B-17 and B-29 bomber crews, and the post-war life of the base. Unlike many bases that sprang up during the war only to close shortly after the peace had been won, Pyote served as an aircraft storage facility and then as home to a radar surveillance site before its final closure in 1963. Alexander also chronicles the demolition of the base, plans for its reuse, and closes his account by taking us on a personal tour of the now long-abandoned site. The documentation for this study includes official base histories and the base newspapers, as well as the traditional mix of books and articles. The personal accounts of life on and around the base, however, are what make this story so intimate.