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BOOK REVIEWS

by Nancy Sapir

March 2009 Book Reviews

Published Mar 11, 2009

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Editor's Note: To assist our readers we've added a direct link purchase option to amazon.com - clicking on the buy from amazon button will open a new window in your browser.

Nine Lives: Death and Life in New Orleans by Dan Baum, Spiegel & Grau, non-fiction, 335 pp., \$26

It would take a raid on a thesaurus to find enough superlatives to do justice to this incomparable work of journalism. Baum has taken the stories of nine New Orleans residents and given us a vivid, respectful account of the ordinary and extraordinary times of their lives which include the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Often, the author allows his subjects to speak for themselves.

There is Ronald Lewis who grew up in the lower ninth ward, the poorest area of the city, which was destroyed in the mid-sixties during Hurricane Betsy and nearly wiped out altogether after Katrina. His oft stated goal was to be "a man", and he is quite a man indeed. Anthony Wells is a good natured ne'er do well who'd be content sitting on any porch talking to passers by, strangers or not, and staying mellow. Dr. Frank Minyard, handsome and happy, a womanizer in his youth, embraces redemption by becoming the city's outraged coroner. Joyce Montana is the wife of the late Tootie Montana, who was determined to overcome violence in the city in his own unique way, sewing magnificent Mardi Gras suits. She watches helplessly as her son struggles in his relationship with his famous father. Billy Grace married into a life of privilege and tried to use his bully pulpit to assist the displaced Katrina victims, but was alone in his efforts. Tim Bruneau is a cop who in a department as corrupt as New Orleans is, shines like a diamond in a pile of coal. John Guidos is an anxious transsexual, yearning to become Joann. Belinda Carr Smalls Rawlins was born poor and smart. She wanted more than she started with and she found it, lost it and found it again with Wilbert



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- Selectmen 585-0500
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