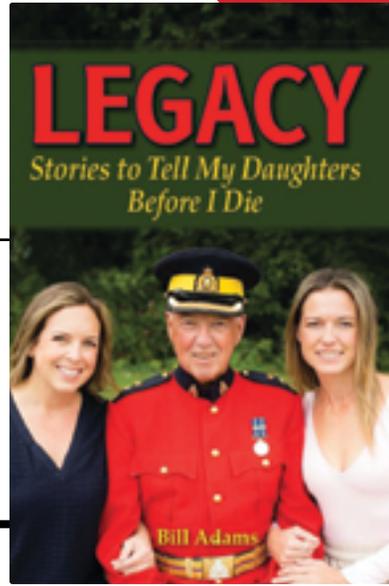


BOOK REVIEW

LEGACY: STORIES TO TELL MY DAUGHTERS BEFORE I DIE

By Bill Adams

Published by Barnstorm Publishing House;
Burnstown, Ont.; 233 pages



COULD IT BE more than a coincidence that the two books I have reviewed for *the Quarterly* in the past year have been about retired members named Adams? The first book, *Woman in Scarlet*, chronicles the challenging and rewarding career of Karen Adams, who was among the first women to join the RCMP. The second book, *Legacy*, is about Supt. Bill Adams, a 32-year veteran of the Force. They are not related, but both members served in D Div., where their careers intersected at the Winnipeg Drug Section. For a time, this crime-fighting duo was affectionately known as Adams & Adams.

My interest in *Legacy* was fueled by the fact that Bill Adams' career was similar to my own in certain respects. We both joined the RCMP in Ontario around the same time, we spent about the same amount of time performing a mixture of contract and federal policing duties, and we both retired at National Headquarters in Ottawa. While my career certainly did not scream loudly for a book to be written, Bill Adams' career may have for a variety of reasons. The author hopes that his book will appeal to RCMP employees, past and present, as well to members of the general public. Told with sincerity, passion, and a good deal of humour, the book is captivating and well written.

Legacy is divided into 15 short chapters, and

each is devoted to a particular duty assignment throughout Adams' career. In the first chapter, Adams advises that, like most 20-year-olds, he was in search of a job that would be enjoyable and provide financial stability through to retirement. In a demonstration of fate, he applied to three police forces and was accepted by the RCMP. Not surprisingly, there is a chapter about his varied experiences at Depot. Proving that none of us is infallible, there is a particularly funny story about Adams accidentally slapping a pair of handcuffs on himself in the guardroom, and not being able to locate a key.

The next few chapters cover Adam's first posting to Whitemouth Detachment, where he would spend the next four years. Many of us can appreciate the comings-and-goings of a small rural detachment in Manitoba, including the requirement to occupy government quarters, the need to be on-call 24 hours a day, and the sense of community that bestows young members at their first posting. It was in Whitemouth that Adams would meet his eventual wife and, after demonstrating that his 1968 Chrysler Newport, colour television, and a \$500 Canada Savings Bond were sufficient to sustain his financial independence, the Force granted permission to be married. At Whitemouth, Adams exhibited an interest and desire to participate in underwater

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rescues. His accounts underscore the inherent dangers and sometimes tragic consequences associated with human recoveries. Also tasked with the enforcement of the Migratory Birds Convention Act and the Canada Shipping Act, Adams seemed to be in his element as the operator of a RCMP patrol vessel. That is, until he forgot to insert the drain plug in the boat. He sheepishly watched the boat sink in the presence of laughing onlookers. It was at this posting that we first discover the toll that long hours and extended absences can take on members and their families. As noted by Adams, the growing feelings of abandonment and isolation experienced by his wife were a testament to her strength of character.

Adams was posted to Wabowden Detachment in 1979. After several years in Whitemouth, both he and his wife may have yearned for the relative anonymity of a larger centre. In sharing the transfer news with his wife, she quizzed, “You got your wish for a “W” posting?” She would quickly discover that it was Wabowden, and not Winnipeg. Finally, in 1982, Adams was transferred to the Winnipeg Immigration and Passport Section. He noted, “For the first time in our marriage, we enjoy a social life where people see us as a couple and not as the local cop and the local nurse.” Three years later, Adams was transferred to the Winnipeg Drug Section, an assignment that he appeared to enjoy. It was there that he would work with Karen Adams.

In 1998, Adams accepted a commission and was transferred to Audit and Evaluation Branch in Ottawa. While there, he received a devastating medical diagnosis for a serious illness that he would later overcome. Undaunted, he took a transfer to the Criminal Intelligence Directorate. He was plunged into the fast-paced aftermath of 9/11, and his experience and superior work ethic led to his final promotion in the Organized

Crime Intelligence Branch. Believing that he had reached the top of his game, and amidst a backdrop of personal crisis and a cherished family, Adams decided to hang up his spurs in 2005.

Throughout Adams’ long and distinguished career, there can be no doubt that his years were filled with personal and professional challenges that tested his resolve. His legacy is less about personal accomplishments, and more about his loyalty to the RCMP, his loving family, and the courage and determination he showed in overcoming certain obstacles along the way. The final chapters of the book describe Adams’ pursuits beyond his retirement from the Force.

Is this book worth reading? To help answer that question, I reached out to one of my troop mates, Rod Keeping, who spent much of his service working in Manitoba. He also read the book, and provided his assessment:

“Bill Adams’ stories about his policing experiences are stories about life as seen through the police lens. His renditions are full of human emotion, tragedy, triumph, interspersed with humour and empathy. I would encourage anyone who has ever worn a badge, or is thinking about a career in law enforcement, to give his book a read.” For me, there can be no quarrel with that assessment. This is a very worthwhile and highly entertaining book about the hits and misses of everyday policing in Canada. 🍷

About the Reviewer

S/Sgt. Michael Duncan (Rtd.), Reg. No. 31637, is a 30-year veteran of the Force and is a member of the Editorial Management Committee, for *the Quarterly*. Retiring from the RCMP in 2003, he immediately joined the Bank of Canada as the Justice System Specialist. Two years ago, he returned to the RCMP as a public servant in Central Departmental Security Section at NHQ.