

BOOK REVIEW

Book Guy; A Librarian in the Peace.
Howard Overend. TouchWood Editions, Victoria, BC, 2001. Paperback, 288pp.

Where does a love of books begin? For a child in the far flung, far northern reaches of British Columbia's Peace River District between 1957 and 1972, it began with the arrival of Howard Overend in a truck full of books. From the Library Services Branch in Dawson Creek, he drove through snow, mud, dust and gravel, over switchbacks and precipices, along and off the Alaska Highway, to exchange and distribute books. He felt like a rider for the Pony Express. The kids called him the Book Guy.

Overend combines his upbeat autobiography with an anecdotal history of library service in the district during the first half of the twentieth century. A careless reader may suddenly realize that the narrative slipped into flashback some pages back; and confusion awaits anyone who has forgotten, or never knew, the intricacies of the Library Development Commission. I advise such a reader to carry on regardless, enjoying the experience which Overend found so "buoyant." The publisher could have helped author and reader by providing tighter editing, clearer format, and -- please, please -- an index.

When, as the penultimate chapter heading laments, "a dream dies," the dream is killed not by isolation or perilous road conditions, but by petty bureaucracy, political decisions, and fear

of the mill rate. Nevertheless, the people in Victoria may have been right in seeing a need to revise the system. We cannot help but notice that, while Overend stayed fifteen years, his assistant librarians seldom lasted more than a year or two. Library service Via Pony Express or Bookmobile requires a very special sort of Book Guy. *Phyllis Reeve.*

BOOK EVENT

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