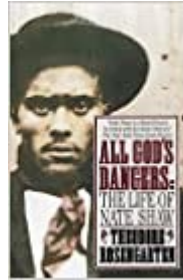




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All God's Dangers



Synopsis

Nate Shaw's father was born under slavery. Nate Shaw was born into a bondage that was only a little gentler. At the age of nine, he was picking cotton for thirty-five cents an hour. At the age of forty-seven, he faced down a crowd of white deputies who had come to confiscate a neighbor's crop. His defiance cost him twelve years in prison. This triumphant autobiography, assembled from the eighty-four-year-old Shaw's oral reminiscences, is the plain-spoken story of an "over-average" man who witnessed wrenching changes in the lives of Southern black people -- and whose unassuming courage helped bring those changes about.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"There are only a few American autobiographies of surpassing greatness....Now there is another one, Nate Shaw's." -- The New York Times
"Extraordinarily rich and compelling...possesses the same luminous power we associate with Faulkner...the same marvelous idiom, the same wry, sardonic humor...[it] will stun the listener-reader, hold him in its grip, and never really quite let go of him?" -- Washington Post
"Eloquent and revelatory. When, finally, this big book is put down, one feels exhilarated. This is an anthem to human endurance." -- Studs Terkel, New Republic

"Extraordinarily rich and compelling."--The Washington Post

I cannot state my praise for this book too highly. Theodore Rosengarten did us all such a great service when he took the time to spend with Nate Shaw and record his voluminous recollections of

his life as a tenant farmer in the state of Alabama during the 20th century. We might wonder why it has taken our great nation so long to embrace and manifest the promises made in our Constitution and Bill of Rights to each and every one of our citizens. This volume does a wonderful, although sobering, job, of explaining the way envy and jealousy each play a crucial role in keeping our fellow citizens down. Envy, Shaw explains, affects the actions of his neighbors of color, and jealousy, his neighbors of pallor. Let us each and every one truly pledge never to withhold the benefits of equal access to education and the fundamentals of property rights to our neighbor, regardless of our opinions of his/her religious belief, pallor or orientation.

I love reading history. Not necessarily so much the big picture stuff - kings, queens, huge wars kind of thing. But history from below. The lived experience of people impacted by the big stuff and how they react. All God's Dangers is that kind of book at its best. In this book we see this on the ground experience of Black people in the south from the end of the civil war into half of the 20th century. I had family who told of events in this same kind of way. Not a straight-forward narrative, but all of the detours were stories in themselves. So clearly American history. Told by such a good man. Seriously, my people.... read this book. Be patient, and listen to the story-telling as it was intended to be heard. You will be so glad that you did.

An inspiring book about hard work, character, wisdom, courage, resistance and accomplishment in the face of extreme poverty and racism in Alabama in the first half of the twentieth century.. "Nate Shaw" (not his real name, author changed from Ned Cobb to protect Cobb while he was alive) was a real American hero. His father was born into slavery, and Cobb was illiterate and impoverished. Most Americans have no concept of hard physical work of the kind Mr. Cobb did from childhood until death, the roadblocks put in his path, and how he fed and protected his wife and children. This is a story that deserves a mass audience.

My reading plan since I retired has included a variety of books about the experience of African-Americans in their country. I had never heard of this "autobiography" transcribed from interviews by Rosengarten. It is one of the finest books I have read on any topic. Sure, it rambles, is marked by circumlocution and misdirection, but is story-telling at its best. Here is an A-A who is proud, realistic, hard-working and builds a whole life for his family after starting with nothing, literally nothing, and rising in status by effort, saving his money and using it to better himself, his wife, and his children. Even years in prison for trumped up charges when dishonest Caucasians were aiming

to confiscate a neighbor's property didn't throw him off the track. A "not to miss" book.

The plain goodness and consistent charity of this man are evidence of "man at his best" in the face of truly terrible life situations. While I winced at what others put him through, from his father to the white men in his town, his constancy to do them no harm and to raise up his family and neighbors is a total foil to the cynicism of our time. If Nate had had some advantages in life, some education, a supportive father, he could have achieved material prominence. But, more inspiring, what so shines out is the greatness of the soul of the man. This is a magnificent story of one man's personal triumph over dreadful odds. There should be a statue for this man among the American greats in the Capitol.

Nate Shaw tells his story in such a way that you almost relive the trials, incarcerations and beatings with him. As a Southerner I was horrified at the behavior of most white people. But I did know it was spot on!

A good story that put me in a world I never knew existed. I agree with the New York Times book critic who said that on some levels it can be compared to "Ulysses"

It was GREAT to meet Nate Shaw. I had no trouble believing his story of life in the post-reconstruction South. His trials and tribulations should be known by everyone who seems to not understand why Blacks have not just become middle class. He always considered himself a poor man because he had no say in life around him. So much had been done to keep him in his place. With his background, which is the background of many people, he had few tools to assist his climb. There were many people, black and white who took aim at him, and the few possessions that he did acquire. But he had a rich mind and a forgiving spirit. He kept going relating, improving and challenging as he could. Powerful Story. I am very happy that it has gotten re-issued 40 years after its first publication. Maybe now, we can hear it correctly and completely.

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