

REVIEW OF “LIFE IN A SPIN” BY NICK MYLNE

Published by The Conrad Press

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IN A TALE SPIN

Earthquakes. War. Fatal and near-fatal crashes. Romance in the desert. Sultans and royals. In the clutches of Iranian police. A world championship. Those and much more, all heavily laced with humour, are in a funny little book by Deddington resident Nick Mylne.

Life In A Spin (The Conrad Press) is nothing to do with politics but all about Mylne’s career piloting helicopters for the Army and commercially. In his prologue he says memories pop up at random and never in neat chronological order. So you have been warned: in 91 pages he dexterously jumps in time and place. Sandhurst, Aden, Stockholm, Middle Wallop, Germany, Oxford, Saudi Arabia, Tehran, Damascus, Redhill, Jamaica, Goose Bay in Canada and Oman pass at blistering speed as he matter-of-factly and tightly amuses or interests us in the high and low altitudes of his life in the cockpit.

He spent 30 years flying and followed that with 20 years teaching aviation law and human performance. But it is not the teaching that he writes about.

Instead we discover an Army general overly aware of his appearance but brought to earth in flames. A crewman who almost lands Mylne in a Middle Eastern prison. A helicopter is downed in the North Sea.

He describes in spare but telling detail of when he was heading for a cliff-top landing only for the tail rotor of his machine to fail. The helicopter spun, hit the cliffside and fell halfway towards the sea before coming to rest upside down and burning with him trapped inside.

A charismatic King Hussein of Jordan, the King of Spain, Qaboos bin Said (former Sultan of Oman) and Nelson Rockefeller slide through the pages. Read how Mylne met the woman who became his wife while he was under suspicion in Assad’s Syria.

It is a testament to the tightness of his writing about these ‘shared moments’ that he manages to cover so much in so few pages, though the densely detailed news-in-brief approach sometimes leaves you hungering for context.

The book is light-heartedly illustrated by Peter Loyd, another former Army pilot and friend.

In these coronavirus days, reading this was like finding an unseen Morecambe and Wise show in the Christmas schedules. Clearly other people think so too — the book is going into a second edition.

John Price