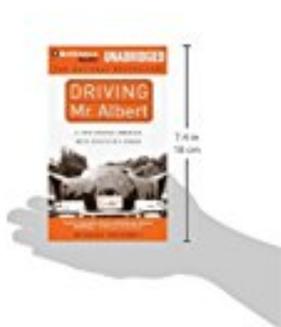


[PDF] Driving Mr. Albert: A Trip Across America With Einstein's Brain

Casey Jones, Michael Paterniti - pdf download free book



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Description:

Driving Mr. Albert chronicles the adventures of an unlikely threesome--a freelance writer, an elderly pathologist, and Albert Einstein's brain--on a cross-country expedition intended to set the story of this specimen-cum-relic straight once and for all.

After Thomas Harvey performed Einstein's autopsy in 1955, he made off with the key body part. His

claims that he was studying the specimen and would publish his findings never bore fruit, and the doctor fell from grace. The brain, though, became the subject of many an urban legend, and Harvey was transformed into a modern Robin Hood, having snatched neurological riches from the establishment and distributed them piecemeal to the curious and the faithful around the world.

The brain itself has seen better days, its chicken-colored chunks floating in a smelly, yellow, formaldehyde broth, yet its beatific presence in the book, riding serenely in the trunk of a Buick Skylark, encased in Tupperware, reflects the uncertainty of Einstein's life. Was he a sinner or a saint, a genius or just lucky? Harvey guards the brain as if it were his own. From time to time, he has given favored specialists a slice or two to analyze, but the results have been mixed. Physiologically, Einstein's brain may have been no different from anyone else's, but plenty of people would like the brain to be more than it is, including Paterniti:

I want to touch the brain. Yes, I've admitted it. I want to hold it, coddle it, measure its weight in my palm, handle some of its fifteen billion now-dormant neurons. Does it feel like tofu, sea urchin, bologna? What, exactly? And what does such a desire make me? One of a legion of relic freaks? Or something worse?

Traversing America with Harvey and his sacred specimen, Paterniti seems to be awaiting enlightenment, much as Einstein did in his last days. But just as the great scientist failed to come up with a unifying theory, Paterniti's chronicle dissolves at times into overly sincere efforts to find importance where there may be none, and it walks a fine line between postmodern detachment and wide-eyed wonderment. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the book offers an engrossing portrait of postatomic America from what may be the ultimate late-20th-century road trip. --*Therese Littleton*
--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Driving a Buick Skylark across the country with an addled octogenarian and an organ may not seem like the ripest material for a story, even if the organ is Albert Einstein's brain. In the hands of a stylish writer like Paterniti, however, the journey becomes a transcendent and hilarious exploration of heady themes like obsession, love and science. In 1955, the octogenarian, a pathologist named Thomas Harvey, removed Einstein's brain during an autopsy and, claiming he wished to study it further, took it home. In the years that followed, he sliced and shipped the brain around the world, but never relinquished most of the organ. Nor, to the criticism of colleagues, did he release his long-promised study. Forty-two years later, Harvey was finally ready to return the brain to Evelyn Einstein, Albert's granddaughter. He enlisted Paterniti, a freelance writer living in Maine, for the task. What ensues is a rare road story that gives equal weight to journey and destination. An expansion of an article published in Harper's magazine, this road-tale bears the classic elements of a spiritual quest—the brain a classic example of a character stand-in. But Paterniti so seamlessly weaves his stream-of-consciousness musings about everything from the theory of relativity to his own sputtering relationship with Harvey that the book becomes much more. Readers will hear echoes from American cultural history—the wanderlust of the Beats, the literary texture of Hemingway and the pastel-tinted surrealism of the Simpsons. It's impossible to put this book down. Paterniti has written a work at once entertaining, psychologically rich and emotionally sophisticated—a feat as rare as, well, Einstein himself. Agent, Sloan Harris. (July)
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