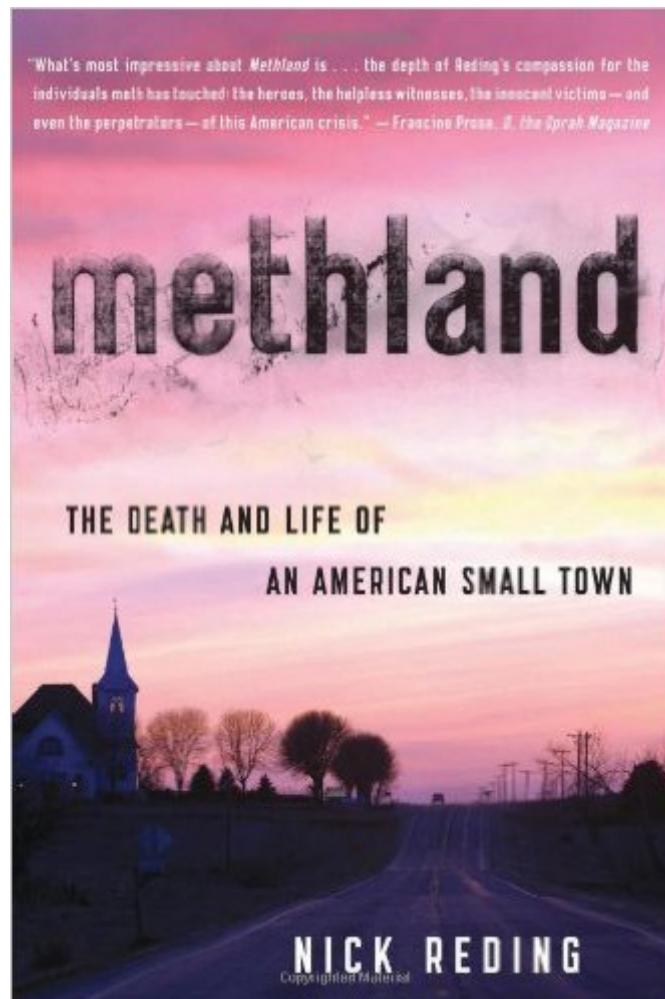


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Methland: The Death And Life Of An American Small Town



Synopsis

The bestselling book that launched meth back into the nation's consciousness. Based on Reding's four years of reporting in the agricultural town of Oelwein, Iowa, and tracing the connections to the global forces that set the stage for the meth epidemic, *Methland* offers a vital perspective on a contemporary tragedy. It is a portrait of a community under siege, of the lives that meth has devastated, and of the heroes who continue to fight the war.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA; Reprint edition (June 3, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1608192075

ISBN-13: 978-1608192076

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (259 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #171,309 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Rural](#) #564 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Addiction & Recovery > Substance Abuse](#) #819 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Criminology](#)

Customer Reviews

Yesterday I retraced the route I first drove with Nick that first day I met him in 2005. I drove by the houses I identified to him as places where methamphetamine had been cooked or distributed. One has been torn down, one still appears dilapidated or "burned out." The other one I barely recognized because it is in such good shape with obvious care and attention being lavished upon it. Oelwein, like many other rural communities, has changed significantly since Nick started this book. Our transformation, thankfully has been extremely positive. We have a new library, a sewer treatment plant that is not violating Clean Water Act Regulations, an absolutely gorgeous downtown area, 400 new jobs in the last 18 months, a microbrewery with multistate distribution agreements, new shops and restaurants, and a new community college campus that allows high school kids to take the kinds of classes previously only available to prep school kids, or kids in major urban centers and allowing them to graduate with an A.A. degree the same day they get their high school diplomas. My point is simply this: None of the above listed things were here that day Nick and I went to Leo's for lunch. The town was (and still is in some ways) suffering from all the forces described by Nick.

There was a palatable sense of despair. The last two chapters describe the start of the transformation, but all books end, and Oelwein's story definitely has not. The problem is insidious and scary. As of 6.15.2009 52% of my juvenile case load is still because of methamphetamine use/addiction. The police are still arresting dealers and finding purer and more addictive product from Mexico. Nick's research methods looked pretty solid to me. The Fayette County Sheriff's Office did have input.

This is an important sociological overview of meth in a small town in America's heartland - its production, distribution, abuse, prosecution, "treatment" and the destruction it leaves in its wake (individual, familial and societal). If you are looking for loads of juicy stories about the human tragedy of meth use (as some reviewers here apparently were), this is not the focus of the book. Oelwein could be Anysmalltown, USA, where the bulk of the employment opportunities have dried up or moved away (in the name of progress - giant agribusiness), and where the inhabitants are looking to escape their troubles and feel better and have the opportunity to make a few bucks to boot. One of the great revelations of the book is that meth was formerly widely used, and historically was associated with increased productivity and an increased sense of well-being (although its bad side-effects were well known). Just how Oelwein morphed from a railroad roundhouse/agricultural community into a place where people ride their bikes in the open in order to cook meth is a story well-developed in the book, told from the perspective of the prosecutor, the hospital chief of staff and the mayor. Their views on how Oelwein might be brought right again, and their own personal struggles of being in Oelwein are valuable - the approaches they ultimately take might serve as a model for other communities in dire circumstances.

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