



Running with a Police Escort: Tales from the Back of the Pack

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In the fall of 2012, quirky and cat-loving Cleveland librarian Jill Grunenwald got an alarming email from her younger sister: her sister was very concerned with Jill's weight and her overall mental and physical health. Having always struggled with her weight, Jill was currently hitting the scales at more than three hundred pounds. Right then, Jill looked in the mirror and decided that she needed to make a life-style change, pronto. She enrolled in Weight Watchers and did something else that she—the girl who avoided gym class like the plague in high school—never thought she'd do; Jill started running. And believe it or not, it wasn't that bad. Actually, it was kind of fun.

Three months later, Jill did the previously unthinkable and ran her very first 5k at the Cleveland Metropolitan Zoo. Battling the infamous hills of the course, Jill conquered her fears and finished—but in dead last. Yep, the police were reopening the streets behind her. But Jill didn't let that get her down—because when you run for your health and happiness, your only real competition is yourself.

Six years and more than one hundred pounds lost later, Jill is still running and racing regularly, and she is a proud member of the back of the pack in every race that she has entered. In *Running with a Police Escort*, Jill chronicles her racing adventures, proving that being a slow runner takes just as much guts and heart as being an Olympic champion. At turns heartbreaking and hilarious, *Running with a Police Escort* is for every runner who has never won a race but still loves the sport.

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Running with a Police Escort: Tales from the Back of the Pack Details

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From Reader Review Running with a Police Escort: Tales from the Back of the Pack for online ebook

Melody Riggs says

Full disclosure: I know the author and received an ARC of this book. That being said, even if I didn't know the author, I would still give this book five stars! This is a fantastic running memoir that offers a unique perspective-- the perspective of a runner at the back of the pack (or as Jill puts it, the runners who get a police escort to the finish line). And it's that unique perspective that makes this a five star book for me. Jill has a fantastic voice, a terrific sense of humor, and above all, an ability to inspire you to get off the couch and just go run-- to put one foot in front of the other. I found this book to not only be encouraging, but as a middle of the pack runner, it gave me a whole new sense of respect for those who finish near the end.

Meghan says

Much like a long and arduous race, I slogged through this book and finished it. However, unlike completing a marathon, I couldn't tell you what I've gained from completing this book. It's one of those books that could have stayed a blog and spared us. It's repetitive ("I was really stressed out about a race, but then I ran this race, finished it, and got some bling!" Repeat xs 20). The author's writing style is obnoxious, AM.I.RIGHT?! I had an inkling the author was a privileged white girl for most of the book, but that inkling was confirmed with the chapter about the Shawshank prison race. The author goes on for several pages about how much she FUCKING LOVES the Shawshank Redemption and the majesty of the prison building, never once acknowledging how messed up it is that the race is organized around a *prison,* which is located next to a newer and operational prison. Oh, and there's an incredibly boring tangents about the history of the Cleveland zoo and park system, should you care.

Anna says

This is a fun memoir of a young woman's experience of discovering running after a lifetime of hating it, and completing a number of races sometimes unapologetically crossing the finish line last. However as she had put on a t-shirt "it's not last place it's running with a police escort." The author has a lively, friendly comedic writing style, which makes this a quick, fun read.

A moderate to large amount of strong language throughout.

Popsugar 2017: a book that's published in 2017

Carla Johnson-Hicks says

I picked up this book because of it's title. Jill Grunenwald could be any number of people. She is a woman who has struggled with her weight all her life. She talks about her sedentary lifestyle from the time she was a child and the kickstart she received from her younger sister to get her to start some kind of exercising program. This is a body positive book, but in a very real story and way that many people will be able to relate to. I did not expect to read this book as fast as I did or enjoy it as much as I did. Jill's writing style is

very conversational. It felt like we were friends talking about our successes and failures. She does use some profanity in the book so be prepared for that. Jill tells about her struggles to start a running program and her challenges along the way. She is not apologetic about being a slow runner, and gets angry at one point when the finish line of a race is basically torn down, they are running out of medals, spectators are walking all over the course and there are still people to finish, including herself. The point she makes about it being okay to come in last, at least you ran and finished the race is so empowering. Yes, she loses her mojo at times, yes she actually gains back some of her weight and yes, maybe her goals are not as lofty as others, but she kept at it, she did not give up and she makes the reader and others feel that it is okay to be slow, to come in last and to have a normal, not perfect body. I learned a lot about running and found myself feeling a bit enthusiastic for a topic I never found interesting. While this book isn't exactly focused on body size, there is a body positive message to this book: no matter what size you are, you can accomplish your goals. I enjoyed this book very much and think maybe even I might be able to start a running program. The publisher generously provided me with a copy of this book via Netgalley.

Tequila says

I received a free copy from NetGally in exchange for an honest review.

When I requested this book, I thought it was more of a body positive book along the lines of Jes Baker's *Things Nobody Tells Fat Girls*. It is a body positive book, but not in the same way. I totally didn't expect to read this book as fast as I did or enjoy it as much as I did. While this book isn't what I thought it was at first, it's still so worth the reading! It is such a fun read and I feel like Jill is an old friend that you're catching up with and I love how her friendly personality shines through her writing. I learned a lot about running and found myself feeling a bit enthusiastic for a topic I never found interesting. While this book isn't exactly focused on body positivity, there's still a body positive message to this book, that no matter what size you are, you can accomplish your goals. Even if you're not a runner enthusiast, this is still a book worth reading!

Dana says

I had high hopes for this book, but I only made it about 70 pages in before abandoning. I'm interested in the author's story, but she tells it here with a bit too much detail for me. If I knew her I'd probably chug through, but it bogged me down. It reads like my posts on my running blog, which have far too much detail for anyone but me to care about. Maybe if the book had a better editor I'd be willing to finish it.

Petra says

Running with a Police Escort chronicles Cleveland librarian Jill Grunenwald's journey from being the girl who used to hate physical education classes to becoming a dedicated runner. She regularly finishes races right at the back of the pack - hence running with a police escort as organizers are closing the course behind her - but as she points out it's not about being fast or slow but about taking small steps to achieve your goals. I really enjoyed the author's candor and wit. Parts of the book were quite inspirational, and it was nice that she didn't focus on weight issues but it really was a book about running. However, it just turned into a series of race reports and as such became repetitive. I've learned an awful lot about Cleveland and its geography. The structure of the book wasn't always clear, which I think may be due to the fact that it is based on the

author's podcast and blog content. Compiled into a complete book, it could have done with some more editing to avoid repetitions and establish a more accurate chronology. On the whole, an easy and enjoyable book, though, mainly due to the author's great personality. This should appeal to people who are looking to take up running for the first time or anybody who enjoys fitness blogs.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

A Cleveland librarian chronicles the emergence of her inner road warrior. Jill was very unhealthy- tipping the scales at nearly 300 pounds when an email from her younger sister convinced her that she needs to change her ways. Self described "slow runner", Jill often finds herself at the end of races with organizers closing the course behind her. Thus the title of her eventual podcast and this book: *Running with a Police Escort*.

Jill reminded me of my younger sister, another "slow runner" who took up running for health reasons. I have a great deal of respect for people who have the courage to make major life changes- be that taking up a sport, counting calories, or giving up meat products. It is so easy to let life determine who you are becoming instead of taking full responsibility for your choices. Jill's point in this memoir is that it doesn't matter how fast or slow you go, you win if you're making even the smallest steps towards your goals. In this passage, she's closing down the race, like usual: *"...I happened to see one of the policemen on the street gesture to get my attention and point to the car following me. I pulled out my earbuds and from the sidewalk he called out with a supportive smile, "You must be a very important person to have a police escort!"* loc 72, ebook.

Jill relates her unathletic/uncoordinated childhood and I felt a lot of sympathy for her bookworm tendencies: *"While (my classmates) ran wild, I'd find a quiet corner along the brick wall of the building and bury myself in a book. My favorites were the Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark series, the macabre illustrations haunting my dreams."* loc 162, ebook. That probably would have been one of my favorites too, but my school library's copy was always checked out. Not that I'm bitter or anything.

Jill reminds the reader that people don't get to nearly 300 pounds without a reason why- an underlying pain that they're insulating themselves from. For Jill, it seems that she was chronically lacking in self esteem and self love. I loved reading about her getting her mojo back: *Truthfully, I didn't even know how much I weighed because the analog scale that I owned didn't go up that high. ... I don't know if I can verbally express what it means to be so heavy that you literally outweigh your scale's capabilities. Like, seriously. Just think about that for a second, okay? A scale has a pretty basic function... and I had gotten so big, I put my scale out of work."* loc 312, ebook.

Running with a Police Escort is a great book for those who are struggling with their weight or the decision to become more healthy. Jill isn't afraid to laugh at herself and there is quite a lot of wisdom in these pages: *"...it's these simple decisions that compound as we make them every single second of every single moment of every single day. It is not the Friday nights or Saturday evenings that determine who we are and where we go: it is the Thursday afternoons or Monday mornings that mentor and counsel our being into a full-fledged sense of self."* loc 818, ebook.

Beware, there's a bunch of swearing too. If you don't appreciate that, you may have to find another book. I also found it to be repetitive after the first couple of races, but it's clear that Jill is writing from the heart and has been changed by every single mile that she's undertaken. Share this book with others who may need encouragement because Jill is a natural cheerleader for the novice runner or athlete of any type.

Some further reading: Confessions of an Unlikely Runner: A Guide to Racing and Obstacle Courses for the Averagely Fit and Halfway Dedicated, Running Like a Girl, and Down Size: 12 Truths for Turning Pants-Splitting Frustration into Pants-Fitting Success.

Thank you to NetGalley and Skyhorse Publishing for a free advance reading copy of this book!

Melanie Johnson says

I LOVED this book and found it very inspirational, especially if you are just getting into running or are a slow(er) runner. Jill talks about the struggles that all of us runners have faced and the mental toughness it takes to complete races. When she talks about running her first half-marathon, I actually teared up a little. I remember how BIG crossing that 13.1 finish line was in my life and all of the hard runs leading up to that day. Thanks to Edelweiss for the Advanced Copy.

Jennifer says

Like many running books, this one had a promising start. Our heroine decides she must lose weight for the sake of her health and decides that she will take up running. Despite the difficulties of running while overweight, she soldiers on and is successful both at building up to longer distances - including even a half marathon - and also at losing the weight. Grunenwald is likable and a skilled writer. However, this book fell into the traps of so many running books. First, there is only so much you can write about running. Grunenwald goes into excruciating detail about the various 5Ks, 10Ks, and half marathons she runs. This has the potential to be interesting if she was progressing, but she's not. This leads me to my second complaint. The only things harder than starting to run is sticking with it. Grunenwald takes that difficult first step of starting to run, but it's clear that by about halfway through the book, she's lost her mojo. She's not running regularly, her times are slowing, and she's gaining the weight back. At the end, she writes how she was seeking a running goal for the year, and I found her choice of a goal that didn't actually require much running entirely predictable. (She decides to run one race each month, as opposed to say, attempting to run a certain number of days or miles or setting a time goal.)

I'd pass on this one unless you're desperate for running-related reading material.

Anna says

An inspiring story about overcoming obstacles and never giving up. Unfortunately it gets a bit repetitive towards the end..

LibraryDanielle says

I've been saving this and only reading it on the Saturdays I do my second job, and it's an amazing read. I'm not normally a fan of memoirs, but this hooked me.

Adam Sockel says

I've rarely felt more motivated to go out for a long run or just get off my couch then I did while reading this book. Whether you consider yourself a true distance runner or you've never voluntarily jogged once in your life I beg you to read this book. It's beyond inspiring and will make you want to be more active in your own life. This book is the literary equivalent to putting "Eye of the Tiger" on in your headphones. You can't help yourself but get up and get moving.

Debbie says

Grunenwald has written an inspiring memoir about running and her journey to become a runner. It was an easy read, with her friendly, chatty style peppered with geeky references and the occasional swear word (so, basically, she talks like me!).

It was really great to see a book about running from somebody who is slow (like me), and has trouble with motivation to exercise (ditto). I'm really happy to see this.

And this book also motivated me to sign up for a 5K. So thumbs up for that!

Review copy courtesy of the publisher via Edelweiss.

Nicole says

I really connected with this book. I am just getting into the Cleveland running scene and choosing my first 5K races to join. as a slow runner, this was both inspiring and humbling.
