

ONLINE JOURNAL™

www.onlinejournal.com

Review

The Informant: A True Story

By Kurt Eichenwald

Broadway Books; ISBN: 0767903269

606 Pages. \$26.00

Reviewed by Kéllia Rames

Online Journal Associate Editor

May 18, 2001—Archer Daniels Midland Company, “supermarket to the world,” was “Price-fixer to the world” during the 1990s when this story of corporate and personal greed unfolded. ADM and several high-ranking executives, including Mick Andreas, the son of politically powerful CEO Dwayne Andreas, were convicted of international price-fixing.

Eichenwald, an investigative reporter, chose the novel form to tell this story because “reality can serve as the handmaiden of fiction. . . . I was attempting to put readers in the same uncertain position as the investigators.” Journalists and students of media may find the story of how Eichenwald wrote the book, outlined at the end, as interesting as the story of ADMs scandal.

The result is a long but engrossing police and psychological thriller about how a whistleblower drew ADMs scheme to the attention of the FBI, and how the agents eventually closed in on the company. In a truth-is-stranger-than-fiction way, the story is full of twists and turns as the informant, an ADM insider, tries to exploit the situation with a scheme of his own.

This is also a cautionary take for those who think the so-called free market is a panacea. As one ADM executive put it, “Competitors are our friends. Customers are the enemy.” If there is no such thing as a free lunch, *The Informant* suggests that, where transnational companies are concerned, there is also no such thing as a free market.

This review was first published in the May 2001 edition of *The Progressive*.

Copyright © 1998–2005 Online Journal™. All rights reserved.