

Kirkus Review on Bertha's Battle

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TITLE INFORMATION

Bertha's Battle - A Lesson in Faith and Survival

Author - Bertha Kreinhop and Mel Calvert

Pub Date: Feb. 14th, 2014

ISBN: 978-1493760220

A memoir of one woman's battle with cancer and her reliance on faith from debut author Kreinhop, with occasional commentary by author Calvert (*How I Quit Smoking and Lived to Tell About It*, 2014).

After having a tumor discovered in her chest, the author first experienced shock—"I was numb all over"—followed by tears, prayer and, eventually, a kind of spiritual acceptance. ("God had a plan. If I were part of that plan for the future, I would be in it. If not, I wouldn't. So be it!") And so begins a personal journey through a daunting world of doctors, tests and chemotherapy. Aided by friends, volunteers and an unrelenting belief in a higher power, the author endures the often painful and embarrassing world of a cancer diagnosis and treatment. From the struggles of getting to treatment sessions through difficult Indiana weather to the debilitating nausea of chemotherapy, the fight against cancer is never an easy one, even with the author's tenacious pluck. Admitting at times to nervousness, self-pity and frustration (even with those who are attempting to help, such as someone who has volunteered to drive the author to the hospital even if they apparently are not very skilled at driving), Kreinhop presents her journey in an immensely believable fashion and puts a human face on the world-shattering position of such a grave diagnosis. Relatable for any reader who has been through such a journey (or may be facing one), the story maintains a steady pace, pausing only to mention—though never to linger—on moments of fear and trepidation. Abutted with personal details that help to illuminate the individuals involved (such as the author's joy at receiving an exercise bike one Christmas), the overall feel is one of a no-nonsense family story that, though lacking in robust flourishes, maintains its verisimilitude. Short on embellishments, the story amounts to one woman's honest telling of a very real and common occurrence.

A brisk, unadorned personal account of a trying time in one woman's life.

Review Posted Online: May 9th, 2014

Kirkus Review on Mel's Last Book

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TITLE INFORMATION

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME ON THE WAY TO MY FUNERAL

Calvert, Mel

ISBN: 978-1481141802; February 7, 2013

This little book shares the often-humorous story of Calvert's life as an entertainer performing comedy, music and magic both in solo performances and with his wife, Sunny.

These short tales offer a brief glimpse into Calvert's career as an entertainer, including how he got started in show business, some of the people he has met along the way and the different places both in the U.S. and abroad where he's performed. Anecdotal tales about his life as a performer are blended together with clean jokes, many of which will be familiar to most readers. Calvert even tosses in a little word-game puzzle, the solution to which is buried in the text at a much later point.

As a proud family man, he includes short sections on each of his children. Black-and-white photos that accompany the text feature the author performing, family and friends, locales mentioned in the book and some funny signs and even a couple of Internet memes. Despite this strange mixture of information and a somewhat disjointed style, the book is quite readable, with the first and second chapters consisting of almost nothing but jokes before switching to a memoir style accented by jokes in Chapter 3.

The author's breezy, informal style makes it feel like he's an old friend casually relating these tales. It doesn't hurt that he focuses on the humorous stories from throughout his life, such as his early days of flying. "I believe I am the only student pilot who has ever landed a plane backward." His tales of performing tend to focus on entertaining events along the way, such as the day a waiter was enlisted to press the play button on a cassette player at the start of a dance number, though he hit fast forward instead and chaos ensued.

The humor runs the gamut from clever to corny, but the lighthearted, upbeat tone makes for a charming read.

Other books by the same author: ***How I Quit Smoking and Lived to Tell About It***

Kirkus Indie, Kirkus Media LLC, 6411 Burleson Rd., Austin, TX 7874
indie@kirkusreviews.com

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"A wonderful and amazing book. I cried until I laughed!"

-Carolyn Billman, Batesville, Indiana



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