

80 Countries in 80 Years

David Wain

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Wain shares fascinating anecdotes about his travels around the world.

Over the course of eighty years, David Wain managed to visit seventy-seven countries, marry three women, found his own business, achieve financial success, and semi-retire with great memories of his adventures. His memoir is a testament to his drive and zeal for life. Full of anecdotes, *80 Countries in 80 Years* will allow family and friends to share in his wonderful memories.

Wain began life in 1927, an auspicious year, he notes—Lindbergh makes his transatlantic flight, talkies are in the movie houses, and Mt. Rushmore is in its infancy. As a child in New Jersey, Wain grew up happily, met his best friend, and barely graduated high school. While school may not have been his forte, business was. He saw opportunities in the glove industry and seized them, creating the Cardinal Glove Company. This business took him around the world. Wain, who comes across as a happy and open traveler, embraced every opportunity the business afforded, making his way through most of Asia, parts of Africa, a good bit of Europe, and Central and South America.

The book has its charms. Wain relates many anecdotes of meeting famous people, or of finding himself in a pickle in foreign countries in the seventies. Photographs, a lifelong passion of Wain's, punctuate the book, giving faces to his three wives and beloved children and grandchildren. He acknowledges his failings, jokes about his children discovering that he occasionally smoked pot, and offers advice on how to live in the world. He also traces the ways in which the glove business and his own management butted up against political upheaval, particularly the Civil Rights movement. Wain proudly notes that he was one of the first business owners to have a factory in the South that paid African Americans a living wage and awarded them management positions. In fact, Wain attended the 1963 March on Washington with five of his workers, placing him firmly in the center of American history; he waxes nostalgic about the magnitude of King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Yet, the book lacks a center. The stories read as if they were simply written down as the author remembered them, rather than surrounding a central understanding. There is little transition between anecdotes, and the time line jumps erratically. The book tries to group memories together, often by country; but as a result, the reader must create a time line for each new country, mentally fitting in the new material with the seventy-odd countries discussed.

As a literary memoir, this volume lacks the introspection and understanding necessary to make it focused and successful. For those interested in business development in the twentieth century, Wain's is an interesting story, and is likely a great and lively read for friends and family who know Wain and can chuckle at his quintessential moments.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (April 17, 2015)

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