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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

9 Lives
Andre Bruneau
BookSurge
978-1-4392-6741-7
Two Stars (out of Five)

Author Andre Bruneau has certainly lived an interesting life: he was a high-powered commercial real estate developer, a singer and songwriter, race horse owner, and world traveler. Unfortunately, his uneven and unfocused autobiography doesn't live up to its potential. The best writing of the book is featured in the first pages, as Bruneau discusses growing up in French Catholic Montreal during the Great Depression and World War II. It is also illuminating to read about the Quebec separatist movement from the perspective of a native French speaker who strode through the financial and business world of the English-speaking elites. Beyond Bruneau's youthful first several "lives," however, it is hard to imagine an audience for the remaining pages, which descend into a fitful, self-absorbed narrative about changes in careers, addresses, and romantic partners.

The author's most passionate writing describes his real estate development negotiations and subsequent interludes as a musician (though more ink is given to contract clauses with business partners than his artistic inspirations). The remainder of the book conveys a restlessness for something to replace the drama of his business career, and it would seem that Bruneau's love and knowledge of high-stakes negotiation and packaging of real estate deals might make a better business book. Readers of memoirs are interested in the details of unusual lives and the unfolding of personalities, but Bruneau's essence is curiously absent. Readers learn about his accomplishments, but we very rarely see how he felt about them. The author must be a charming fellow to have so much success with business and women, but other than his own asides of Freudian self-analysis and many lines of regret, we never learn much about who he really is.

Some photos would enliven things and help anchor the nine lives in the reader's mind. An editor is also strongly suggested to rid the book of distractingly frequent typos, grammatical errors, and misuses of words ("irascible" for "irritable"; "beer" for "beard"; "I slam on the breaks"). The author's use of the present tense and an unusual typeface also impede smooth

reading.

9 Lives could be developed into an entertaining memoir, but only the first part of the book holds appeal for a greater audience than Bruneau's circle of friends and family. Lives four through nine summarize many unusual life experiences, but readers never learn how these have shaped the author's worldview or what drives him to constantly switch wives, hobbies, and careers. Even in the final pages, one is left wondering what he yearns for.

If it is true that variety is the spice of life, then *9 Lives* should be zesty indeed, but unfortunately, the promise of the vivacious beginning leaves readers moored alongside the author at the end: disappointed, unsatisfied, and seeking something more.