

A Journey through Life

Fred S. Hirsekorn

FriesenPress (Aug 6, 2014)

Softcover \$22.99 (280pp)

978-1-4602-4699-3

Experienced at life, Hirsekorn has valuable lessons for adults and children.

A Journey Through Life, by Fred Hirsekorn, anthologizes some key moments in life for this German-born author who has witnessed the devastating reality of the Holocaust, been to war, and experienced the loss of one of his adult children. Through poetry, storytelling, and photographs, Hirsekorn attempts to capture his life story and share valuable life lessons at the same time.

Divided into seven sections, the book is a patchwork of four distinct parts: Hirsekorn explores life lessons that can be shared with children; he daringly reveals some interesting and quite compelling family and personal history; he examines his difficulty with creative writing and overcoming writer's block; and finally, he contemplates philosophical questions.

Several of the anecdotes confer important life lessons that are perfect for sharing with children, though adults will surely benefit as well. The chapter entitled "The Monster" reminds us to face the unknown head-on, and to remember that scary things aren't always what they appear to be, and "Chocolate Pudding" teaches the importance of patience.

Moving through the collection is somewhat difficult. There are many noticeable and rather distracting grammar and spelling errors throughout, hindering the book's flow. Transitions from one passage to the next are disjointed at times. And some of the short stories end rather abruptly, leaving a feeling of dissatisfaction or confusion concerning the overall goal of the tale. Even more confusing is the four-part framework of the book. Each is so distinctly different from the others that they fail to form a cohesive whole. In particular, the section dealing with the author's struggle with creative writing and how to deal with writer's block is puzzling—though interesting and at times inspirational, this topic does not fit well with the rest of the story.

The tone of the first section, which primarily focuses on life lessons for children, is presented in a childish voice. Though ideally adults will share some of the content with their children, kids will not be reading directly from this book. The tone of the rest of the book, however, does seem better suited to the target audience.

"Culture Shock," "Stressful Suspension," and "From a Withered Tree a Flower Blooms," all poems, are particularly meaningful passages. In general, the poetry is quite pleasant and well crafted. Additionally, the use of humor is refreshing and does help move the book along when other elements weigh it down. "It All Started With a Kiss," "The Idiots Won the War," and "Jump off and fly?" are particularly enjoyable.

With all of its stumbling blocks, *A Journey Through Life* does still entertain and offer something valuable. The content is very relevant and has the potential to appeal to most adults, a little bit at a time.

LAURA MAHON (November 5, 2014)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a

positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.