

Andrew Penman's Long Unwinding Road: An Inspiring Story of Natural Self-Healing

Andrew Penman

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Andrew Penman's Long Unwinding Road: An Inspiring Story of Natural Self-Healing is the miraculous story of a tiring journey from life-threatening injury to recovery.

In 1989, Andrew Penman was hit by a car after a night of partying. He sustained life-threatening injuries that left him with a lasting brain injury. The author describes the typical residual effects on people who have experienced such an injury: "Problems with understanding, memory, concentration, seeing, hearing, speaking, and thinking; moodiness; depression; antisocial or aggressive behavior; difficulty expressing themselves; and changes in sexual drive."

Penman is listed as the author of *Andrew Penman's Long Unwinding Road*, but it's unclear who actually wrote the book: "This book is an account of [Andrew's] journey, initially based on extracts from his mother's diary and later on extracts from Andrew's own diary and a number of interviews of Andrew with the editor of this book." It's always clear when Penman is writing and when he's not, but it's not clear who is writing when he isn't, and it's off-putting to be unclear about who edited the book. Because it consists mostly of journal entries, the book is very factual, lacking the descriptions that would have connected events and conveyed Penman's feelings.

Adding to the confusion, *Reach for the Stars* at first appears to be the title of the book, but the title page shows it instead as *Andrew Penman's Long Unwinding Road*, which also appears on the cover as one of three subtitles.

Readers looking for a cohesive narrative will be disappointed. This volume is more like a thorough scrapbook than a memoir. The book contains photos, many of which are dark or grainy. It also has unexplained reproductions of documents from Andrew's life, such as a driving test certificate; specific context for such artifacts would have been helpful.

Today, Penman practices three nonaggressive martial arts: aikido, t'ai chi, and chi kung. He and his wife, Lalita, who met in 2002 through "a company that introduced British men to Thai ladies," split their time between Thailand and Wales.

The book's flaws aside, readers who have shared similar experiences may find inspiration in Penman's perseverance as he learns to rebuild his life, step by step.

MELISSA WUSKE (March 12, 2013)

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