

# ForeWord Reviews

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

### **Breathing in the Fullness of Time**

William Kloefkorn

University of Nebraska Press

978-0-8032-1932-8

(April 2009)

Nothing attracts a reader to a book like humor and charm, both of which this author exhibits in abundance. From his opening essay on his decision to abandon football in favor of a life of writing and teaching English, Kloefkorn looks at life and the world with a dry wit. Other humorous pieces cover his experience in marine boot camp, cursing, and success in winning a trophy as a hog-caller.

As the book progresses, Kloefkorn introduces more serious subjects that are poignant, thoughtful, sensitive, or bittersweet. Examples include his imperfect relationship with his alcoholic brother, the poverty that overshadowed his childhood, the growth of his children and the mixed emotions of seeing them leave home for independent grown-up lives, his participation in a project that took him into grade schools to teach students how to write and appreciate poetry, and his mother-in-laws lifelong generosity of spirit.

Each chapter is introduced by a short quotation, primarily from poetry. Poetry is also woven into some of the essays, but always in relation to the authors own experience. This gives the poetry context and makes it meaningful to readers, whether they are poetry aficionados or not. Most notable is the essay in which he connects his childhood tree house to James Dickey's *In the Tree House at Night*. In another essay, he includes a poem he wrote for his son when his son married. Poetry is not Kloefkorn's profession or even his passion, but it is clearly an integral part of his life. The number and choice of these poetic excerpts is carefully balanced to enhance, not overwhelm, the stories in the book.

This collection is accessible to a wide range of readers. The stories span all stages of the authors life; his language is direct, clear, and honest; and his descriptions make the scenes leap off the page. Although the tales are apparently simple, the writing is complex, with dimensions that resonate and foster connections between the stories and his readers lives.

This is Kloefkorn's fourth volume of reflections. What makes this volume so gratifying is how the essays span a complete life and are integrated into a cohesive whole. The language and phrasing, the poetry that is woven through the book, the images and description, and his humor

weave the stories together and provide the reader with a deeply satisfying reading experience.

*Aline Soules*