Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Caught in the Storm
Ingeborg Ghadimi
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Five Stars (out of Five)

> *"The madness continued. Cities were declared 'fortresses' and had to be defended to the last man. Hitler instituted his Scorched Earth policy and ordered everything destroyed before retreating from the enemy."*

Born in 1930 in Breslau, Germany, Inge Hettwer spent her childhood under Hitler's reign in Germany. As a German citizen, she witnessed persecution of the Jews, dictatorial control, and family hardships. Yet, in her childhood innocence, she remained unaware as the horrors of war took a firm grasp of her people and her homeland.

Inge grew up in a typical middle-class family. As the oldest of three children, she developed a strong sense of responsibility. As the war took her through defeat, Russian and Polish occupation, and loss of her home, she developed the skills and strength of character necessary to survive harsh conditions.

Hitler demanded much of ordinary citizens while he fulfilled his dreams of expansion and racial purity. For the most part, even those who disagreed kept quiet to avoid harm to their families. During the occupation, the Russian and Polish victors displayed unrestrained hatred for the Germans and the realities of living in a land reduced to rubble.

In *Caught in the Storm*, Inge remembers those years with exquisite recall of detail and her descriptions give readers a sense of place and time. She doesn't sugarcoat the miserable conditions under which her family lived but she does paint a picture of the strength and courage required to survive with families intact.

Readers not only see the world through the eyes of a child; Inge presents her personal development with honesty. She gives readers well-developed characters — from real-life family

to captors — and a strong sense of place and history. To read her book is to learn both the history of an era and the hardships of war.

At one point in her teens, Inge questioned why the Poles and Russians hated them for what the Nazis did. Her father responded: “In all wars the innocent ones are left to hold the bag.” Inge began to reason that “Black wasn’t all black, white not always white. There were a lot of gray areas. Justice was a relative thing. I began to realize that life was complex.”

Inge’s youth, natural exuberance, and strength of character enabled her to find little lights of happiness throughout the dark years. She presents her family’s journey with a simplicity and directness that will have readers quickly turning the pages to find out what happens next.

Pat McGrath Avery