Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Corinne and Me: An Unlikely Friendship
Betty Ann Hoehn
AuthorHouse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

The highest highs and the lowest lows of individual lives fill the pages of the best heartfelt memoirs. *Corinne and Me* is a fine example of a candid autobiography written not only to entertain the impersonal reader but as a tribute to loved ones who left a lasting impression on the psyche of the author's fragile, beautiful soul.

Betty Ann Hoehn grew up in an affluent part of Memphis, in the turbulent 1960s, where she was nurtured by Corinne, an African-American woman from a downtrodden section of the city. This special nanny comforted Hoehn in her darkest moments and gave her the emotional sustenance she needed to survive. Time passed, yet the gentleness of Corinne's guidance was never forgotten. Though from a fortunate background—Hoehn's family met with tremendous success in the automobile industry—she combated stress that an average girl would not have been forced to endure. Expectations and pressures, trademarks of wealth, affected her childhood and young adult years, adding to the typical angst associated with maturing.

Hoehn shares the intimate details of her relationships with family members and friends, revealing both the negative and the positive influences on her life. She strikes a nice balance between realism and idealism in the exploration of her past. Addressing raw issues such as segregation, addiction, and death, this book is far from a rose-colored glossing or mere puff piece.

The author is straightforward and confronts sensitive subject matter head on, rather than escaping through a polite side door, as can be seen in this excerpt: “I don’t know where the term came from, but ‘funny breath’ has become my code phrase for alcoholism, the disease that has attacked one generation of my family after another, bringing chaos, heartbreak, and in many cases premature death. Going back many generations, Dad is the only man from his family who made it past his fifties.”

Her ability to express a difficult revelation in simple words gives this outstanding memoir its strength. Its single shortcoming is a tendency to focus on aching experiences to the point of leaving an impending sense of doom in its tone. Though it may be natural to relive the agonies of long ago events that never stopped hurting, reflection can often turn into an excruciating catharsis.

Born in 1954, Betty Ann Hoehn now resides in Del Mar, California. *Corinne and Me* is an inspiring story of hope for those tempted to give up in the face of tragedy and loss. This is a worthwhile read for anyone who is suffering and would like to proceed with the process of *living* .

Julia Ann Charpentier