

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Echoes of my footsteps: An Autobiography by Ivan Z Gabor

Ivan Z Gabor

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Four Stars (out of Five)

Harrowing tales of the Holocaust bombard bookstores in staggering numbers yet few readers would classify these memoirs as unremarkable, much less boring. Each has a personal message of courage and endurance.

As a child, Ivan Z. Gabor narrowly escaped death by firing squad and spent a frightening portion of his youth on the run from would-be killers. As a result, he learned that no one could be trusted. While growing up, Gabor knew how to value every moment and gained perspective on the deeper meaning of his presence on earth.

Born in Hungary in 1934, Gabor enjoyed a comfortable, middle-class existence until the Nazi regime inflicted their terror on the world. He describes his circumstances as “surreal” and marvels at the dreamlike episodes that juxtaposed treacherous incidents with soothing interludes. One moment facing death, the next in a safe haven eating cake (literally), his passage through life may be comparable to a cinema showing downbeat and upbeat movies in flashing succession. While he faced the hardship of war and famine, Gabor rose to meet every challenge.

After serving in the Israeli military, Gabor became a children’s fashion designer and formed his own clothing company in Argentina, though anti-Semitism eventually forced him to leave South America. Later, he met Rebequita, the love of his life in Miami.

Written with the assistance of Jeffrey Beal, this nearly perfect autobiography travels from one time and place to another. In an unusual, somewhat jarring, presentation of events, Gabor’s life is revealed in spurts, alternating between his remote past and more recent experiences in Miami. These chapters are not put down in sequential order, even though each specific section remains chronological. Unfortunately, the frequent shifts tend to distance the reader rather than allowing deeper understanding. The effect is somewhat artistic, much like a freewheeling independent film opposed to a predictable commercial endeavor.

Among those fortunate individuals who survived to write about the Holocaust, Gabor is a captivating example of fortitude and strength.

Julia Ann Charpentier