ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Edgewise: An Assignment to Remember
Darlene F. Wofford
978-1-4259-8299-7
Four Stars (out of Five)

In early 1984 Georgia resident Darlene Wofford's comfortable middle-class life was ripped apart. In January her 10-year-old son drowned in the family swimming pool. Shortly afterwards she was abducted viciously beaten and raped by two strangers leaving her with a disfiguring facial scar and months of violent memories and terrifying thoughts. Her fictionalized memoir *Edgewise* which won the 1996 Atlanta Writers Club Novel of the Year award retells her trauma with a cast of pseudo characters and within the framework of her psychiatric rehabilitation.

Prompted by her real life psychiatrist's pleas to write out the details of her life as a part of her therapy Wofford's *Assignment to Remember* provides a powerful no-holds-barred and well-written account of fictional Delaney Rutherford's life and times —good bad ugly—and of the progress she her family and her psychiatrist made in repairing her shattered life. For readers with specialized knowledge the book could serve as an intriguing psychiatric case study written in layman's language about "what a crazy person looked like up close and in person."

A natural born storyteller Wofford infuses her mind-saving task with empathy and sympathy for her character and the events that shaped her life are rich with drama and tension. Delaney's unwavering love for her father and the life-long impact of his sudden death leads her to later drive away her widowed mother's suitor. ("You're not my Daddy and you never will be.") An early victim of unfortunate relationships her "first true love" turns sour; she is underpaid and overworked on her first job; sexually harassed on another; later she is date-raped while still a starry-eyed teenager. The rape results in a pregnancy and a miscarriage from an automobile accident even as she repeatedly denies she was ever pregnant. Her husband is very much of a loving father-figure and their early years together as Delaney recounts are typical of an upwardly mobile young couple relying too readily on loans and credit cards but happy with each other and their growing family. Interspersed with Delaney's descriptions of her life are her frank accounts of interviews with the psychiatrist and references to a favourite older nurse who continues to call her "little girl" and feeds her "the beautiful bluebird pills."

A sensitive retelling of mind-numbing events Wofford's story is grounded with

references to popular culture and events of the times like the Vietnam War and the first black students attending all-white schools. Wofford portrays happy times at birthday parties and ten-year class reunions but also the trauma of guilt rejection amnesia and hate. Most importantly she presents a rare and riveting portrait of an individual baring her soul to recover her sanity. A highly recommended read.