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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

From The Farm To Harvard: My Amazing Journey
Pearl Chase
Pearl Chase Books
978-0-615-47515-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

"Believe in yourself as much or more than anyone else believes in you," writes Pearl Chase in *From The Farm To Harvard: My Amazing Journey*. Her inspiring life story documents how faith, family, and determination helped her overcome many obstacles as she journeyed from the cotton fields of her youth to the academic and professional success of her adulthood. Chase is a retired college professor who has received noted fellowships and held prestigious positions in higher education.

The first half of the book covers Chase's early years, from childhood through high school, in Louisiana of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. She describes her experience of growing up as the daughter of a hardworking sharecropper. Her father's determination to break out of this unfair system, purchase his own land, and build his home sets the stage for Chase and her thirteen brothers and sisters to pursue their studies and careers outside of farming. The author shares many stories of growing up in a rural farming community; many of them are amusing, some are sad, but they all offer lessons and confirm Chase's faith in God. Chase thrived in school. Her stories of her elementary and high school days demonstrate her love for learning. It is not surprising that she succeeded in a career in education.

In high school, and later at Southern University, Chase begins to recognize and understand the impact of racial discrimination, but she doesn't complain about it. Instead, she views it as a challenge to overcome. Graduating with a degree in mathematics, she takes a high school teaching position and develops a very successful remedial mathematics program, despite her lack of experience as an educator. Burnt out after seven years of intensive one-on-one work with students, she moves into the corporate world, but quickly realizes that it is not the place for her. Chase's determination and faith move her into graduate work at the University of Oklahoma and, finally, onto Harvard, where she receives master and doctoral degrees.

The small amount of description of her time in college and graduate school is disappointing. Chase tells so many good stories of her childhood that more anecdotes of this

later period in her life would make this book even more interesting, entertaining, and inspirational. She devotes some of her memoir to stories and successes of her siblings and their families, and, while interesting, they don't always contribute directly to her journey.

The eighteen life lessons included near the end of the book summarize the messages of faith, family, and the value of education that she hopes to convey in relating her journey. Written in a folksy style, *From The Farm To Harvard: My Amazing Journey* is a pleasurable and inspiring read.

Mary Cary Crawford