ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Having the Time of My Life
Peter Chapel
CreateSpace
978-1-4662-4255-5
Five Stars (out of Five)

Peter Chapel was born October 25, 1919. On this particular day, his mother had just finished the morning farm chores when she noticed that her house was on fire. After she led her nine children from the burning structure, she went into labor prematurely—possibly from the excitement and exertion of the rescue—and gave birth to Chapel.

The author documents his unique entrance into the world in the latest version of his autobiography. Chapel recounts numerous anecdotes and memories of loved ones as well as events that were important in creating the person he is today. Each chapter includes an appendix with photos, letters, and documents that bring the memoir to life—it's almost as if everything in Chapel's past is happening in the present moment. Chapel shares an enlightened perspective that could only come from ninety-three years of experience and hindsight that surely could be called wisdom.

Raised in Canada by pioneer parents who were immigrants from Austria, Chapel's work ethic and sense of personal responsibility were instilled in him early in childhood when his family's survival depended upon their hard work and cooperation. He writes, "Despite the hardships, inadequate food supplies, and deprivation of all comforts of normal living experienced by my parents, I do not ever recall any atmosphere of gloom in our home." In 1941, Chapel was drafted and served four years in the army during World War II; later he became a citizen of the United States.

Having the Time of My Life falls into the tradition of autobiographies like Ernest Borgnine's *Ernie*, Alan M. Dershowitz's *Chutzpah*, and James Michener's *The World is My Home*. These memoirs share a conversational and personable tone. Chapel's enthusiasm for the past is catching, and he speaks in a good-natured voice. With a wink and an elbow into the reader's ribs, he tells stories and reveals information about people, places, and events from his and America's past. Though Chapel's writing seems on the surface quite plain, there is a musical vein running through the body of his memoir.

Chapel's autobiography is filled with letters, photos, and original song lyrics that exude love—the love of family and lifelong friends, the unrequited romantic love a young man feels for a girl, the mature love a man has for his wife of many years, and the love of a country one has served loyally. Above all, a deep love for life abounds within the pages of this memoir.

Anyone interested in reading about American culture after the World War II will enjoy *Having the Time of My Life*. It represents an important perspective and a piece of national heritage that will one day disappear. Readers will undoubtedly recognize the wisdom Chapel gracefully shares through his words.

Lee Gooden