



Clarion Review

Biography

How Can YOU Play Drums? Finding Positives from Adversity

John Caro

iUniverse

978-1-4401-5342-6

Four Stars (out of Five)

While most parents are proud of their children, John Caro has special reason to brag about his second-youngest son, Danny. At the age of two, Danny was involved in a freak accident and experienced third-degree burns over most of his body. His family helped him through a long, painful recovery and supported him in his pursuits as a professional drummer and public speaker. Caro has written *How Can YOU Play Drums?* about his pride for his son.

Caro writes a dramatic story that is all the more affecting because it is true. When Danny was hospitalized after his accident, doctors discovered that the burns had stripped him of his fingers, toes, and most facial features, including his eyelids and his nose. Most people in Danny's situation die during the healing process, so the Caros worried greatly about their son's survival. Even if he did live, what quality of life would he have? The details are gory, but they help to portray the extremity of Danny's situation.

With specialized care from the Shriners' Hospital in Boston, which specializes in treating child burn victims, Danny did survive. Many reconstructive operations restored his face and gave him thumbs so that he could use what remained of his hands. Danny found ways to indulge and strengthen his talents for rhythm and music, becoming a jazz drummer in high school and college, despite the negative expectations of scoffers who gave the book its title. This triumphant part of the book is all the stronger for its dire beginning.

Despite being an accomplished musician, Danny was still lacking in poise and self-confidence, so his father introduced him to Toastmasters International, an organization designed to improve one's public speaking abilities. Danny used this training to become the president of Totally Toastmasters in 2005, then an inspirational speaker. He now travels around the United States, advocating for the Shriners, an organization to which he now belongs, and sharing his story of success in adversity.

Like any good inspirational story, *How Can YOU Play Drums?* follows a trajectory from innocence, to calamity, to experience and achievement. The book is competently written and moves swiftly and easily. At only 106 pages long, it is easy to digest in one sitting, although the heart-wrenching parts about Danny's suffering may be difficult for some readers to bear. Ultimately, Caro's biography of his son is a powerful example of how willpower and faith in God can help people through life's difficulties. This book will appeal to Christian readers of inspirational biographies and perhaps also to other parents with children of disabilities who are wondering what their future might be like.