

It's Not All About Me

Elvio Del Monte

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With the passing of each generation we lose the personal accounts of lived history. *It's Not All About Me* is author Elvio Del Monte's attempt to document his own family's past. Del Monte was born in Utica New York to an Italian father and an Italian-American mother. The family struggled during the Great Depression and young Del Monte had to wait in line for handouts from a food relief program. After high school Del Monte entered the military's mountain medical battalion. He trained for alpine conditions in Colorado before serving active duty in Europe during World War II. During his tour he served courageously sustaining a shrapnel injury and receiving a purple heart. The memoir ends with Del Monte's discharge from the army as he takes a bus from California back to New York.

There is no doubt that Del Monte bore witness to some incredible moments in American history. He notes that his boat to Europe zigzagged to avoid Nazi U-boats. Unfortunately for the reader extraordinary events like this are buried in mundane details. Del Monte gives equal attention to self-evident statements: that he's always liked hot beverages served hot and that he called his parents "mom" and "dad."

As noteworthy as some of Del Monte's experiences are it is almost impossible to sustain interest due to the sheer sloppiness of the writing. One chapter titled "Guarding Angel" (instead of guardian angel) includes a discussion of a "fowl order" when describing a bad smell. *It's Not All About Me* also suffers from a lack of organization; the early chapters are each devoted to a family member and yet Del Monte also uses a chapter called "Personal Data" to list the details of each family member he has just described. Del Monte then leaps into his own WWII experience for the remaining three-quarters of the book. Despite the title it appears *It's Not All About Me* is mostly about him after all.

Within this book lies a great story of courage family ties and honor but as it stands now it is merely a poor transcription. Instead of placing his family's history his childhood and his war experience in a haphazard lineup Del Monte could have avoided redundancy while intriguing the reader by using his own experiences in WWII to flashback to family memories—e.g. when he as a soldier happens upon a family in the Italian countryside eating a meal his mother used to make. In its current transcript style *It's Not All About Me* will interest only Del Monte's family members for its genealogical details. General audiences require not only that Del Monte's memories be interesting but that they be told in a typo-free well-crafted story.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (April 21, 2008)

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