

Lessons Learned: An Ordinary Man, Extraordinary Life

Brian Scott Sherman

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Heartfelt, intriguing, amusing, and at times truly unbelievable, Brian Scott Sherman's autobiography, *Lessons Learned*, details his life's adventures as the "real life Clark Griswold" and the lessons he learned along the way.

A self-proclaimed family man, Sherman remains humble, modest, and truthful throughout the entire book. His stories span fifty-plus years on earth, only leaving out what he felt wouldn't be pertinent or would be too personal to share. From nearly getting shot by his father-in-law and then crash-landing in a KC-135 Stratotanker in Hawaii to a man dying in his arms and driving headfirst into a pole, every story is accompanied by Sherman's own brand of humor and thought-provoking lessons learned.

While life is experienced chronologically, lessons learned aren't always; Sherman subtly makes this point by not telling his stories in a linear manner. But time-skipping can also be confusing. The memoir jumps from when the author's daughter Heather was born in 1988 to 1992 in just two chapters without a real explanation of the time in between.

What makes Sherman's stories so relatable are his blunt honesty and his willingness to tell not only the highs in his life, but also his losses and screw-ups. Everything is told with enough detail and intrigue to keep anyone entertained and rooting for Sherman and his family. For example, when his mother, Kathy, wins the lottery, Sherman describes how she struggled for many years, working several jobs at the same time to stay afloat and pay her bills. He segues very nicely into how he finds out the news and how his entire family reacts.

Interspersed with these life-changing stories are more commonplace experiences, like the birth of his children and the difficulties he and his spouse faced when their daughter Heather was born. Sherman and his first wife endured a nerve-wracking pregnancy that included misleading gender reveals and time spent in the neonatal intensive care unit. It's an experience that many can relate to, and it's refreshing to have it spelled out not only in a no-nonsense way, but also by the father rather than the mother. While his stories could do with less repetition and recalling of names, each person in his life comes alive as he tells his tales.

Sherman's friends and family, who urged him to write this book, refer to him as the "real life Clark Griswold" after the *National Lampoon's Vacation* character who is always getting into crazy and awkward situations. Sherman accomplishes his task of entertaining and teaching at the same time, while also remaining honest and forthright. *Lessons Learned* will bring tears and laughter (sometimes at the same time), but most of all, it will teach some of life's most valuable lessons that can only come from someone who's already experienced them.

ALLISON BUTLER (December 1, 2016)

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