ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Life Goes Out of Style
Bueno
CreateSpace
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Three Stars (out of Five)

The American dream is alive and well according to Bueno's memoir, a short volume that would certainly be worthy extracurricular reading for minority students and those interested in the lives of American immigrants.

Joe Bueno Garcia is second youngest in a family of Mexican immigrants. Born in Bakersfield, California, at the depths of the Great Depression, Bueno endured a tough upbringing. While many struggled during that era, it's worth noting that part of this memoir's appeal is that Bueno was further handicapped by being raised in a farm-labor family, one poor enough that Bueno did farmwork whenever he wasn't in school. Eventually, Bueno dropped out of high school and did restaurant work to help support his family. His parents divorced, and his mother turned to alcohol to ease the pain from her cancer, and not being able to afford treatment. Unfortunately, Bueno offers nothing that might help a young person in a similar environment.

Bueno became enchanted with "very pretty" Helen Pulido. In short order, he was married, back in high school, father of a daughter, and working multiple jobs. Here, the memoir chronicles an experience outside the norm—how many dropouts father a child and then return to school? The young father confronts his need to support his family, and so he parlays his high school drafting classes into a job with an aircraft company in Burbank. Strangely, Bueno doesn't discuss any prejudice he might have faced as a Mexican in a white-collar job, a discussion that would have added value to the memoir.

The author presents himself as a dedicated and hard worker. He does a nice job sketching out coworkers and bosses, and readers will enjoy the positive portrayal of a man who knows success is nearly always related to hard work. Before he signed on with Lockheed, Bueno worked for the Crystal Inn, a classy dining club in Bakersfield. He writes about one of his bosses, "Mr. Lorenz did a very nice thing for Helen and me for our first wedding anniversary … he invited Helen and me to come in Sunday for a very nice dinner and dancing."

Bueno and his wife eventually had three girls, and he progressed rapidly at the aircraft

company, working on assorted projects and even contributing technical drawings related to the lunar excursion module (LEM) project. Then, in the process of helping his wife's brother get his life on track, Bueno's family fractured. His wife left him, and Bueno ended up the single parent of three daughters.

The chronological memoir discusses Bueno's struggles with housekeepers, his adventures in reentering the dating world as a single parent, and his progress through various jobs. The writing throughout is straightforward, plainspoken, and conveys the author's story adequately. A closer self-assessment may help to provide an understanding of why he succeeded when so many in similar circumstances failed. There is no bibliography, index, or similar material, and the book's cover and layout consist of manipulated photographs.

Overall, Bueno's story provides reassurance that hard work, dedication, and family love can earn a man success and satisfaction.

Gary Presley