Clarion Review

General

Life's Highway with a Good and True Everlasting Love
Jean Solbert
Xlibris
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Four Stars (out of Five)

“The man stood, as if dazed, his expression one of puzzlement. He looked down at his clothes, then at his surroundings.” The elderly man, James, is lost in the woods, trying to find his wife and his way home. It appears as though he is suffering from Alzheimer’s or a similar debilitating disease.

This is how Jean Solbert introduces his slim, forty-page book, allowing readers to follow James as he searches for his wife. Along the way, James recalls some of the major events of his life, seemingly wandering in and out of these memories.

The book’s title is clever, especially because James is earnestly attempting to locate his one “good and true everlasting love,” Becky. Readers feel empathy for James because he is scared, frustrated, and sad, but the memories he retells are, for the most part, happy ones. He shares moments in time depicting his family when he was six years old, his first meeting with Becky at the roller rink where he worked as a young adult, their four-year separation when he was stationed in Burma during World War II, and their own growing family after the war. These episodes are contained in individual chapters and are usually bookended with James coming back to the present, still searching for Becky.

Solbert’s writing is clear and generally error-free, with a hint of dry humor occasionally slipped in. For example, James “recalled the many nights he and his brothers and sisters had studied and done their homework by the light of a kerosene oil lamp, and if they had time before bedtime, their mother would let them pop popcorn or sit around the oak table cracking walnuts or hickory nuts. The winters were longer then, or so it seemed.”

At least two inconsistencies come up in the text that might confuse readers. James mentions being from a small Ohio town, but later, at an older age, says a place in Illinois is his hometown. The number of children he and Becky raised is put at four, but a later count makes it

five. These minor details do not detract from this well-told story.

Readers who enjoy nostalgia, historical fiction, or human-interest stories will find Solbert's book a nice treat. They may also identify with James's thoughts as he anxiously searches for Becky: "Funny, he thought, how fast life goes by. Here he was, in his sixties, and it seemed just a few years ago that he was in high school."

With an ending befitting an O. Henry story, *Life's Highway with a Good and True Everlasting Love* is a quick read that will leave readers looking forward to more of this author's work.

Robin Farrell Edmunds