Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Living With No Regrets

Frances H. Livesay
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Three Stars (out of Five)

In this inspirational memoir, Frances H. Livesay describes how she remade her life after the death of her husband. A daughter of privilege from a large, well-principled family in Mississippi, Livesay opens with enviable descriptions of Greek cruises and African safaris taken during her childhood. At Centenary College, Frances helped start a "Lil Brother Lil Sister" program in her fraternity, and she chose to mentor a pledge named Shawn. They became fast friends and married a few years later. From the beginning, Frances felt she had a near-perfect marriage. "I felt so safe with him and could ask him anything," she writes. "Early in our marriage, I told him the things I needed from him. He couldn't read my mind, so it was up to me to let him know how I felt loved."

Frances and Shawn were able to maintain a luxurious lifestyle. Throughout their marriage, Frances stayed home to raise their two children. She also studied the Bible and taught Sunday School classes. In these early chapters, Livesay brushes past incidents that readers may wish had been explored more deeply. For example, she mentions her own weight loss due to Adderall and a period of time when Shawn's struggle with his weight impacted their marriage. Apart from these occasional asides that may halt readers, this part of the book flows neatly and doesn't bog down with unnecessary details.

In 2003, the life-changing moment came when Shawn crashed his Porsche and was killed instantly. Frances was surrounded by caring family and friends who helped her through the whirlwind of funeral arrangements. She began counseling sessions and learned that even though her friends and family had certain expectations of her, there is no "right" way to grieve. Frances also formed a network of four widows who shared common feelings and worries. "We told stories of strange things we had done, like putting on our late husband's shirts and smelling

them," she writes. "I don't think anyone would understand unless they had been exactly where we were."

After seventeen years of marriage, Frances found herself dating again, and she shares some stories of her first few relationships and the way her family reacted to the new men in her life. For several years, Frances felt the desire to remarry, but she eventually learned to enjoy meeting new people and dating just for fun. She was relieved to find that she was capable of caring for her children on her own.

Livesay was lucky to have the means and support to get her through the indescribable pain of losing a best friend and lover. She offers an honest description of her own pain and how she was able to cope. Readers who haven't suffered this loss can also take away a valuable lesson about marriage. Today, Livesay lives with no regrets because she and Shawn both consistently put each other first and communicated openly. She wishes everyone could have a marriage like hers.

No Regrets suffers at times from awkward phrasing, a confused timeline, and choppy anecdotes. Nevertheless, women who are suffering from a similar loss, or those who are still in a relationship, will find comfort and inspiration in Livesay's story.