FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Memoirs of an Old Dyke

Jinx Beers
iUniverse
Unknown $0.00 (pp)
978-0-595-52624-6

Memoirs of an Old Dyke is the autobiography of lesbian activist and *Lesbian News* founder, Jinx Beers. This honest—and at times even blunt—narrative depicts those figures and events that most deeply impacted the writer's personal growth. Beers tells her story through a series of fifty-seven chapters; in their brevity and thematic independence from each other, however, they are perhaps best described as vignettes. These, in turn, are accompanied by personal photographs and poems—written purely for pleasure—that Beers organizes from earliest (composed when she was five) to latest (composed when she was sixty).

Beers' memoir picks up in 1933 during the "worst part of the Great Depression," which happens to be the year she was born. The last of five children, Beers, who believes she was "a lesbian in the womb," grew up in a lower middle-class family that was not without its share of skeletons and dysfunctions: a beloved older brother's suicide; maternal neglect of an unwanted youngest child; and paternal sexual abuse of two older sisters. In recounting this particular part of her life, the normally matter-of-fact Beers does on occasion allow the reader to see hints of deep personal hurt and anger, especially where the relationship with her mother is concerned. She speaks of feeling that she was "a mistake" and notes that while she "didn't exactly hate her [mother]…[she] had little or no respect for her."

The writer passes quickly over the rest of her young life, which is unremarkable, save for a precocious sexual coming of age, as evidenced by a doll she unabashedly calls "my lover from the time I was about five years old." The *real* story of Beers' life, though, doesn't begin until she enters the air force at age eighteen and gets her first chance to see beyond the narrow Southern California confines. She lives life on her terms as a lesbian woman, regardless of the personal and professional risks involved. Four years later, she returns to Los Angeles, where she settles into a butch lifestyle and an emerging lesbian bar scene.

Lovers are in and out of Beers' life. If she mentions them at all, it is only as they help shape her into what she eventually becomes: a champion of the lesbian community. The writer's dedication to her cause finds its most significant and enduring expression in *The Lesbian News*, a publication Beers founds in 1975 and heads for the next fourteen years. Although her affiliation with the *TLN* would mark the apogee of her social and political influence, the writer takes the greatest satisfaction in knowing that her life, which she has lived boldly and without shame, has helped change minds about "the concept of what a lesbian is and what rights we should be afforded."

In its plain-spokenness and refusal to be anything other than a space where the writer can freely and spontaneously record her past, Beers' autobiography is definitely not intended to please or entertain a large general audience. Still, it is a more than worthwhile read, particularly for those interested in women's and/or lesbian autobiographical writing and history.

MAUDE ADJARIAN (September 27, 2010)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Review make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.