Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Mimi and Her World
Mimi Correll Cerniglia
Author House
978-1-4567-0058-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

The author races readers through nine decades, steering a course filled with snippets of world history and brief glimpses of her personal life. Beginning in the 1920s, Mimi mentions the Roaring Twenties, the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, and the marriage of her parents. We see an upper middle-class business owner, his stay-at-home wife, and their three daughters. The author, the middle of three sisters, was born in 1928, the same year that Sir Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin. The family survives The Great Depression relatively untouched and fit through World War II with little deprivation and no personal loss. War is the impetus for her sister's marriage to a soldier before graduating high school. Her new brother-in-law introduces Mimi to her first husband about the same time her parents' marriage was spiraling downward. Ironic that alcohol abuse broke up her parents' marriage and later her own.

Whether it was the author's middle sister status or a rabid curiosity, she grew up with a keen interest for the world and the people around her. Truth and facts seem important to Mimi, and she had difficulty with her older sister's penchant for stretching the truth. "Mother became quite agitated when Betty Lou would stretch the truth almost to the breaking point. I heard Mother say Betty Lou would climb a tree to tell a lie rather than stand on the ground and tell the truth. This helped me deal with Betty Lou's distorting the facts."

Readers will quickly realize that Mimi neither embellishes nor exaggerates, nor deviates from the truth. She couches her personal family memories in careful parameters that begin and end with 'as I remember.' Students of history and anyone who have lived when Mimi lived, will be able to delve deeper and fill in the blanks of the superficial references to major historic events. Sadly Mimi doesn't flesh out her personal experiences. She resorts to vague, abstract descriptions throughout the book: "It was a memorable experience and Betty Lou was very good," or "We worked very hard and Mr. Helms said we did a good job." Like a skipping stone

she skims along the surface of her life. And she doesn’t include any photos, not even a photo of the author on the back cover.

When it comes to her son, he can do no wrong. Family members and friends will delight in Mimi’s tale. But as an autobiography, it offers very little insights or profound observations. It is a gentle retelling of a privileged life based upon hard work and opportunities. Difficulties are glossed over, successes are humbly acknowledged. Yet, those who enjoy peering into people’s windows as they drive past, or are fascinated in hearing about a woman engaged in the world around her even into her 90s, will find Mimi’s tale entertaining and motivational.

Dawn Goldsmith