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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

My Guardian Angel & Me

Arlan W. Horman
AuthorHouse (Mar 9, 2010)
Softcover $15.99 (292pp)
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Retired military and civil engineer Arlan W. Horman has lived a long and rewarding life. Over the course of what must have been many hours, Horman narrated his life story into a cassette recorder, and a transcript of the twenty-three tapes he recorded has been published as *My Guardian Angel & Me*. “I thought it was necessary,” he states at the end of the book. “I thought it was time that someone did this for the family.”

However, *My Guardian Angel & Me* is not a memoir in the traditional sense, and it does not succeed as a book to be read by those outside of his family. It is an onerous, unedited transcription, complete with ramblings, repetitions, and misspellings. The words “tape was not clear” and “tape blanked out” appear in the middle of some pages. Chapters are not really chapters; they represent Horman’s dictation divided by tape or tape side. Each chapter ends abruptly when the tape ends, whether or not the sentence, let alone the story being told, is finished, and one chapter does not necessarily pick up where the previous one ends. Undoubtedly, editing and formatting would transform this lengthy account into a delightful book that’s well worth reading, and any relative or friend who takes on the task would be doing both Horman and potential readers a wonderful service.

The information Horman shares ranges from the smallest particulars of his childhood in a Wisconsin farming community to some wonderful tales of his time with an engineering battalion at the end of World War II in Europe and as a military combat engineer in Korea. He speaks of his family and his post-military career, his retirement, and various global changes he has observed over the years. His style is strictly conversational, punctuated with endearing side comments such as, “So, that’s the way it happened.” Occasionally, he will start a story with, “I don’t know if I brought this up earlier,” and even when the answer happens to be “yes,” the story is repeated. Despite the digressions, repetitions, and paragraph-long sentences, the man and his stories are powerfully appealing. Horman demonstrates a real flair for remembering details, and he tells his tales with style and humor. Reading *My Guardian Angel & Me* often feels just like listening to one’s grandfather.

Horman has been a fortunate man in many ways, and he humbly acknowledges what he believes to be the divine assistance provided to him. “I’ve got a good guardian angel looking after me,” he states. A Lutheran since childhood, he credits God and his guardian angel for his longevity. “I’m getting up in years,” he admits, “but I’m shooting for a few more.”

CHERYL M. HIBBARD (September 5, 2012)

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