Clarion Review

Body, Mind & Spirit

My Number Was Up, Dad: A True Story of Inspiration and Hope
Gary Vaught
978-1-4259-3786-7
One Star (out of Five)

No parent expects to outlive their child and it is a grievous wound when one does. In My Number Was Up Dad the effort made by author Gary Vaught to assimilate and justify the sudden loss of his beautiful 18-year-old son is evident. It is also admirable how Vaught and his wife used the death to reach a new level of understanding about life. Their experiences with their son's spirit after his death are revelatory to them necessary to them but remain personal to them.

The Vaughts' son Gabe died suddenly as a consequence of his Type I diabetes. A few days afterward Vaught's wife Dawn who has some abilities as a medium facilitated the first of a number of conversations with Gabe "on the other side." The book begins with the events leading up to Gabe's death then presents some of these exchanges verbatim. The remainder of the book consists of Vaught's discussion on what transpired.

There's no question that these had to have been powerful encounters including the time where Dawn received accurate information from Gabe about the locations of a lost diamond ring and when he accurately described items on a table hundreds of miles away. Getting a glimpse of something larger than their philosophies brought them obvious comfort.

The poor quality of the writing and Vaught's confusion about what it is he wants to accomplish with his material however undermine his efforts to move from the personal to the universal. Much of the book is little more than a memorial to his son with proud descriptions of his accomplishments and lots of photographs. Elsewhere the material resembles stream-of-consciousness processing of his experience. Yet another thread is Vaught's missionary zeal in his belief that he has discovered something no one else knows.

Once in a while Vaught does capture a genuine insight such as how much our fear of death contributes to our inability to love or the degree of arbitrary conditioning we receive through family education and society. But too often the material fails to penetrate below the

surface. Sentences such as “The messages are for everyone who will listen and not just those who can see read or hear” and “Caring will result in the perpetual chance for life when we are without the knowledge that we need most” hold almost no meaning and are far too typical.

A mature reader in the spiritual genre will not find any revelations in this book. Equally clear however is that Vaught has no shortage of heart and a bereaved or spiritually untutored reader may well connect with that.

Robin Ireland