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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Winter Always Turns to Spring: My Triumphant Journey: Sachiko "Takata" Bailey
Akemi Bailey Haynie
FriesenPress
978-1-4602-1692-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

While Sachiko "Takata" Bailey is a survivor, it takes years before she is able to thrive.

A Japanese war bride, Bailey married African-American soldier LeRoy Bailey in 1952. In this memoir written with the help of her daughter, Bailey recounts how little she knew of what to expect from life in America. She was unprepared for segregation and racism. She was also unaware that her husband was not nearly as charming as he seemed to be initially. He would become violently abusive toward her and their seven children.

Bailey characterizes herself as a spoiled child and a rebellious young woman. Growing up, she survived pneumonia and escaped, along with her family, the bombing of Hiroshima. Bailey says she married an American soldier in part to get back at the father who she feels abandoned her after her mother's death.

In concert with the Japanese culture's focus on the natural world, Bailey tells her story using the theme of winter transitioning into spring, with winter representing the hard times one goes through before the glory of renewal and rebirth. The book is written in Bailey's voice as if she is speaking and has a simple, straightforward style. It is at its most lyrical describing Bailey's childhood in 1940s Japan. For the most part, the narrative flows, though there is an odd jump back in time with the unexpected revelation that the Bailey children spent years performing as a musical group with LeRoy as their manager.

Each chapter of the book begins with a quote from Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, Bailey's Buddhist mentor. Bailey credits the practice of Nichiren Buddhism in helping her make changes in her life and influencing her family to improve their lives as well: "I learned that rather than seeing my situation through the eyes of a victim, my environment was actually my teacher and a potential impetus for me to make profound and lasting change."

It is admirable and inspiring that Bailey openly shares her story and includes photographs of her family. Her desire that others read her story and learn from her experiences led her to be very candid.

The copyright page lists both Bailey and her daughter Akemi Bailey Haynie as authors, and there is a copious amount of additional material written by both: a useful glossary of terms, the epilogue in which Bailey outlines four life lessons, an acknowledgments page, and a postscript written by Haynie. Much of this supplementary content could have been consolidated or woven into the narrative itself.

Winter Always Turns to Spring will appeal to those who want to read about women—particularly immigrant women—overcoming great difficulties as well as to those who are interested in Buddhism.

Jada Bradley