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BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Rescuing the American Dream: The Entrepreneur's Way
G. Web Ross
Howard A. Klausner
Ross
978-0-692-00378-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

Who doesn't enjoy an underdog story? *Rescuing the American Dream* offers two such Horatio Alger tales. These suspenseful play-by-plays feature young, college-educated American men fulfilling their dreams. The authors also offer evidence that what makes the reach for the American Dream successful is a twelve-step process based upon honesty and integrity. What is currently missing from the business scene, the authors insist, is "character."

"We have abandoned the very foundation of the American Dream in our headlong pursuit of wealth, success, comfort, and power," Ross and Klausner write. "These things are…the destination. They are not what this Journey called life is about. The Journey…is in what we become in pursuit of these things. Ultimately, this journey comes down to one thing, our character."

G. Webb Ross tells the story of his son, Tom, in order to demonstrate the twelve steps to success and how ethical and honest men can achieve the American Dream. Tom and his college friend, Rob Anthony, tenaciously cling to their business plan of perfecting and selling another man's port cleaning invention for the paper pulp industry. The story is rife with cliff-hangers, and conflict flows easily with an informal writing style. "Rob took Fletcher's tee-up, and made the presentation of his life. In his sports-oriented mind, this truly was the bottom of the ninth for his company…. No mulligan here. His team was in the hole and they needed a break," the authors write.

Tom's statement that he plans to be a millionaire before he turns thirty seems to contrast with Ross and Klausner's altruistic statement about "the Journey." But even so, readers will cheer for these two young entrepreneurs who started their business on a shoestring and attracted a small "team" of loyal employees. When the story ends, however, it omits reference to the team and whether they received any of the proceeds.

The second half of the book features Wayne Gullstad and his dream to run an ink

removal and recycling business, also for the paper pulp industry. The son of a man with “big ideas” and a mother who prefers a risk-free lifestyle, Wayne seems conflicted. When he marries Carol, Wayne finds a kindred risk-taker and together they grow his dream from a little basement office into a multi-million dollar business leader, CityForest. In an ironic twist, Gullstad’s endeavor benefits when his $30 million debt to ENRON is settled for $6 million in ENRON’s bankruptcy settlement.

This well-written book offers a feel-good read with a message. Eighty-year-old G. Web Ross knows the paper business, having retired as CEO of a large newsprint manufacturing company. He teamed with Klausner who writes and produces films and television, to offer this self-published book.

Readers may sense that the authors never quite settled on the real purpose of the book nor do they offer any new solutions. Yet readers who enjoy tightly written underdog success stories with an added pitch for ethics and integrity should love this book.