

Riding This Electron, Hanging on for Dear Life: A Soul Searcher's Theory of Everything

Tom Zidik

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A memoir with elements of self-help woven in, Riding this Electron, Hanging on for Dear Life conveys wide-ranging musings on family and meaning.

Tom Zidik's quirky and ranging memoir *Riding This Electron, Hanging on for Dear Life* follows his value-driven years of hard work and introspection. It is a collection of memories, short stories, influential moments, and hard-earned lessons. The title references Zidik's comparison of the universe to an atom, and the resultant connection he feels to the world, science, and religion.

The book begins with Zidik's childhood, chronicling the impactful positive and negative moments that stand out in his memories. He discusses an ordinary childhood day, filled with sun, laughter, and family, and declares that this was one of the happiest moments he can remember; he references an uncle whose hard hugs play into why he dislikes to be embraced.

Warm moments—of the love he felt for his grandparents and mother, for example—are shown to have shaped him into a man who values being loving, caring, and open-minded. The book emphasizes the importance of love and family in developing a life of abundance and happiness.

Zidik's memories also include an extended period of work at the Hershey factory, a brief bout with kidney stones, and time spent admiring the deer that make his property their home. He dissects what such experiences meant to him, and how they helped him become the person he is now.

Other scenes are more focused on life changes, including Zidik's achievement of financial success. Here, he imparts advice, particularly to young people at the beginning of their professional lives, and does so with detailed accounts of his own monetary gains and retirement funds.

Zidik extracts from his experiences a more universal formula for living life well, sharing a wide spectrum of wisdom. This ranges from very specific financial advice for the few who can afford to buy second and third properties to advice on how often to exercise and what diet older adults should adopt. Rather than being based in or supported by research, they mostly arise from Zidik's own trial-and-error experiences and personal preferences.

Though passages are straightforward and detailed, they lack creativity and depth, and read like pages right out of an audience-conscious journal. The style is stream-of-consciousness, with no clearly defined path; the book bounces from one memory or thought to the next. The underlying notion that Zidik's methods and successes will be transferable to others who follow the same positive steps is not convincingly conveyed; the instances here are so specific that the related advice will not be applicable to most people.

A memoir with elements of self-help woven in, *Riding This Electron, Hanging on for Dear Life* extrapolates wide-ranging, easy-to-follow musings on family and meaning from the experiences of one man.

KATIE ASHER (March 6, 2018)

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