

Risen from Beyond

Leopold Ortiz

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Risen from Beyond is an inspirational memoir that lauds perseverance, hard work, and an optimism.

Leopold Ortiz's memoir *Risen from Beyond* credits hard work and perseverance for his rise from an impoverished childhood to positions of honor and authority.

Born in Texas in 1926, Ortiz moved with his family to California, where his stepfather worked in a steel mill. Though money was scarce, love was abundant. The book describes Ortiz's childhood as one defined by school, chores, and church, all at a time when a new car could be purchased for \$360 and the average rent payment was \$20 per month.

Ortiz enlisted in the military at seventeen, beginning forty-plus years in the service. He was determined, though he had a tendency to procrastinate; he maintained a sense of humor and enjoyed time with friends and family. He found happiness in his circumstances and came to wish the same for others.

The book also devotes space to showing how faith was a source of support during hard times. A sense of contentment is furthered by accounts of the births of Ortiz's children and grandchildren, about whom humorous memories and anecdotes are shared, while Ortiz's wives are praised for their wonderful characteristics. Meetings with important politicians, military officers, and civilians are listed, and post-retirement travels are recalled with details from famous sites.

Conversational, precise, but often dry, the book's occasional funny stories are its highlights. It recalls a couple of crazy pilots who drove their motorcycles up and down the hallways of the officers' dormitory; it records false eyelashes falling into a drink at a social event. But while the book includes the details of what happened in Ortiz's life, it reveals little about how he and others felt about what they experienced.

Most of the black-and-white photographs included are clear; they range from shots of Ortiz as an infant and a young child through to his time in the military, from his adult life with his family, and of his children and grandchildren.

Organized topically, the book becomes repetitive when its events overlap. Several sentences are exact repeats of each other, as when Ortiz lists the admirable characteristics of his first and second wives. The book does not distinguish between negligible and life-altering events, and its attention to minor details, including the first time Ortiz rode a bike, watched television, or shaved, slows the pace.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (April 28, 2020)

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