



Survival: My Father's War as an Air Force Gunner and POW

Barbara Trendos

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Survival is a detailed account of one man's simple and powerful pursuit of meaning amid the horrors of life in a prison camp.

Survival: My Father's War as an Air Force Gunner and POW by Barbara Trendos is an epistolary-style account of a World War II veteran's experiences.

Trendos shares the story of her father, Albert (Wally) Wallace, who fought with the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II and was a prisoner of war in the prison camp Stalag Luft III. In the opening scene, Wallace is laying in bed listening for the sounds of the planned escape from the camp, that became known as "The Great Escape." He reflects on the aftermath, including the murders of many of the men who escaped. From this weighty, engaging start, the narrative moves into a chronological account, using short dated entries, of Wallace's military career and war experiences.

Trendos channels her father's voice, writing in first person, based on her father's wartime experiences. By making the account her own, rather than sharing it directly from her father, Trendos is able to include, she admits, more details than her father would be willing to.

The book takes the form of a diligently detailed journal—penned by Albert, as imagined by Trendos. When he, along with the other prisoners, evacuated the camp, he faced a decision of what to take: "the logbook, or chocolate and smokes." In reality, he left the logbook behind; Trendos captures what it might have said, treating her father's reflections with great care. In addition to his letters, Trendos used her father's post-war talks and interviews, family mementos and photos, anecdotes, and conventional public sources to complete her research and capture Wallace's voice.

Trendos's attention to detail shows, but it often makes the pace of the narrative slow. Many entries are less than engaging, and the journal format gives fairly equal weight to big events and small ones. Photos and historical records give the book a comprehensive, intimate feel that befits Trendos's love for her father.

Those who are also children of World War II veterans will find Trendos's account of her father's wartime experiences to be enlightening and insightful. The book will also be meaningful to those studying the lives of prisoners of war for its careful accounts of the realities of daily life in a prison camp.

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MELISSA WUSKE (November 17, 2016)

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