Clarion Review

Humor

That's Going to Leave a Mark
Keith Beam
CreateSpace
978-1-4499-4073-7
Four Stars (out of Five)

Writing humor well is a tricky business. It requires a mix of good storytelling and a healthy dose of exaggeration; the funniest stories are often based on personal problems or blunders. With a stand-up comic's timing, author Keith Beam's mishaps could leave even viewers of TV's *America's Funniest Home Videos* wondering if he is for real. Beam's *That's Going to Leave a Mark* is a series of anecdotes about accidents he has endured from childhood to the present. They include falling off a cliff when a GPS program guided him wrong, a thrilling leap for a baseball that ended with a crash into a chain-link fence, and even a trip down his son's new slide that resulted in an emergency room visit.

Beam is hardly alone in his frequent trips to the hospital. He comes from an accident-prone family, which includes his mother, who, "while watching an ambulance and police squad work on an auto accident across the highway, plowed her own car into a telephone pole, breaking her nose and totaling her car." His father is no better: He once threw a wrench at a tire, and like a boomerang, it came back and hit him in the head.

After suffering seventeen broken bones, twelve surgeries, hundreds of stitches, and a skull fracture, Beam says he has been hurt so often that local hospitals have pre-completed forms on file for him.

A bow-hunter, columnist, and outdoorsman who tests hunting equipment, Beam was even injured on a testing job when a chain supporting a tree stand failed and he fell. Some of his funniest comments occur when he describes his thoughts as an accident is happening. As he falls from the tree stand, for example, he thinks, "what to do? If I land on my feet I won't break my back, if I land on my back I won't break my feet; decisions, decisions, decisions. WHAM!"

His imagery is witty, as when he jokes about his keen hearing as a hunter ("I can hear the Earth rotate around the sun") or when at age four he was jumping from bed to bed in his "tighty-

whities” and lost his balance. “I was like a largemouth bass exploding through the lily pads to attack a frog,” seconds before he lands in his brother’s open tackle box filled with hooks and lures.

Unfortunately, despite entertaining stories, the book lacks a professional layout, starting with the copyright page, and needs proofreading for punctuation and consistency. Such distractions are minimal, however, and fixable in future printings.

The episodes described were obviously painful when they happened, but Beam deftly leaves his mark by keeping his readers in stitches.

Linda Salisbury