



The Wager Nobody Cared to Win: My Life with ADHD

Victor M. Calderon

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'You'd better behave or else the gypsies will come and get you because they like bad children.' ... I was a strong candidate for being kidnapped by gypsies.

Author Victor M. Calderon shares many such tales from his Puerto Rican childhood in his memoir *The Wager Nobody Cared to Win*. His first published book, it is not his only accomplishment. Calderon spent several decades in the United States Army and then working with the U.S. Customs department.

Early in the promotional text for the memoir, Calderon emphasizes that he has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and that it affected his life. Throughout the rest of the work, however, he doesn't address it further. This memoir mainly tells separate stories of events that had special meaning or importance for the author. There is some overlap in the tales, along with recurring characters from his life, but the chapters aren't in a strictly chronological format.

While Calderon has lived an adventurous life, his prose doesn't always convey the intensity and excitement of the moment. Instead, the stories often come across as passive accounts of events, rather than engaging pieces that will keep readers interested.

One example is when Calderon recounts a close encounter with a tornado. "Suddenly, we decided to seek shelter inside the walk-in closet ... Seconds after we entered the closet, a beam from the roof came loose and projected through the ceiling, stopping only inches from my wife's head ... Minutes later, it was all silence." While it was an intense moment for his family, he writes it as exposition, rather than as a scene that would draw readers into the suspense and fear of the moment.

At time, though, Calderon does capture the action of the moment very well and in great detail. One such story is from the chapter for which the book is named: "Victor had only about four hundred feet before hitting the hardtop runway, and he was desperately trying to untangle his reserve canopy to no avail. [He] then gave up his efforts ... and decided to prepare for the landing, regardless of its outcome."

English is not Calderon's first language, so occasionally there is some awkward phrasing and word choice. However, this doesn't detract from the events he is recounting.

Mostly, *The Wager Nobody Cared to Win* demonstrates that Calderon came a long way from being threatened with gypsies to behave properly as a child, to growing up to be a courageous, orderly military man.

This book will appeal to those who enjoy memoirs, historical nonfiction, and military nonfiction. It is two editions in one: the first half of the book is written in English; the memoir is repeated in Spanish in the second half.

LAURA MUNION (February 23, 2012)

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