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The Way I Saw It: Memoirs of an Ophthalmologist

Harold A. Stein
AuthorHouse (Apr 2, 2013)
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These enjoyable vignettes of a doctor's memories make for a great storytelling session.

Howard A. Stein wrote *The Way I Saw It* as a family heirloom, and the memoir serves that purpose well. His sense of humor and pride in his work as a leading ophthalmologist are evident throughout, with fun anecdotes from each era of his eighty-four years. He purposely keeps the book lighthearted and positive, sharing the happy memories of his family and friends, career, travels, and the many interesting people he has met.

Studying at the world-famous Mayo Clinic and Oxford University, winning numerous awards and honors, authoring and co-authoring forty medical texts, and volunteering in third-world countries naturally leads to a host of fascinating people, places, and events to write about. Stein shares these memories in small snippets gathered into chapters covering different eras in his life, such as childhood, early career, and travels. Interspersed are nearly one hundred photos and drawings illustrating his experiences. The book feels like Grandpa telling stories to his grandchildren on a Sunday afternoon.

To appeal to a wider audience, Stein would need to broaden his anecdotes into full stories, with more detail, structure, and background. In particular, transitions from one topic to the next would help this read more like a story and less like a random collection of events. For example, in just two pages the subject jumps from lying car dealers to writing books to tennis to lobsters and finally to toothbrushes.

There are many interesting stories here, but there seems to be something missing. The old writing adage to "show, don't tell" applies. When discussing meeting Queen Elizabeth II during a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, Stein simply says he met the queen, her sister and mother, and other members of the royal family, and that he said, "Pardon me," when he bumped into the queen while mingling. Further details would make this story more intriguing: What did the queen do when he bumped into her? What did it sound like, smell like, look like in The Garden at Buckingham Palace? Backstory on people and events that those outside his inner circle are not familiar with would also be helpful.

"I have purposely written this book for my family, friends, grandchildren and unborn great-grandchildren who will survive me and pass down the stories," Stein writes. "The aim was to simply make it a fun book of some of my experiences and interesting stories." If this really is just a treasury of stories from his life for his grandkids to have, then Stein has fulfilled his mission. No doubt it will be a treasured heirloom for future generations who can look back on his accomplishments and see what life was like in his day.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (October 8, 2013)

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