ForeWord Reviews

BIOGRAPHY

Truckin' with Sam: A Father and Son, and the Dyl, Rockin' and Rollin', on the Road
Lee Gutkind
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More than one in ten of all children in the US and Europe are born to fathers who are age forty and older. At forty-seven, Lee Gutkind became one such "old new dad," a term borrowed from Mark J. Penn. *Truckin' with Sam* details the benefits and challenges of this role.

As a father, Gutkind is able to surround his son with literature, music, and adventure; he does this by way of "Truckin'." A project begun in 2003, Truckin' takes the father-son pair to locales such as Grand Canyon, Alaska, Tibet, and Tanzania. Truckin', Gutkind writes, "could be interpreted as a metaphor for spontaneity—a lack of restriction." As such, *Truckin'* is a version of Kerouac's *On the Road*, although tamer. The rebellion and impulsiveness that began this project Gutkind both celebrates and questions: "am I acting my age—or am I trying to be someone I am not? Am I an older dad trying to act like a younger dad just for the sake of my own ego and satisfaction?"

In the face of such hard-hitting questions, *Truckin'* provides an education for both the elder and younger Gutkind—they learn about each other, history, geography, manhood, and their respective roles as father and son. Gender is foregrounded in this book, and Gutkind relies on traditional understandings of femininity and masculinity. He reinforces, Mars and Venus style, the differences between the two genders. Yet he portrays a complex pair of characters dealing with knotty issues—homophobia and sex, among them.

Both men—Sam and Lee—are in close view. Rather than gloss over with summary, Gutkind spotlights important moments from a storehouse of recorded experience: On the road, the travelers videotaped new acquaintances and each kept written personal logs.

Sam Gutkind makes first-person appearances in his excerpted journal entries and an afterword that reads much like a (well-done) college admissions essay, which stands to prove that the boy of this book is now an adult who is poised to make significant academic contributions. Like father, like son. After all, Gutkind is another type of father as well—"the Godfather" of creative nonfiction. He is an accomplished author, editor, and educator, and the founder of the literary magazine *Creative Nonfiction* and the MFA program in creative

nonfiction at the University of Pittsburgh.

Gutkind delivers according to his reputation. *Truckin'* is by turns cerebral and funny. It makes for an enjoyable ride.

Janelle Adsit