Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Twelve Months to Live...again: An Inspirational Memoir
Karen Dye-Walker
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4251-7641-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

When her son, Jeffrey, then twenty-four years old, called her one evening in December 2006 and uttered his “famous” words: “Mom, I’ve been thinkingÂ…” Karen Dye-Walker knew that something was about to happen. She didn’t realize that these words would be the beginning of a journey that would change her life. “Mom, you need to write a book. I want you to write a page a day,” he said. “And I will hold you accountable by calling you every day to see what you have written.” The knowledge that her son loved and accepted her, and valued her life experience enough to make such a suggestion moved her beyond words. His affirmation of the stores of inner strength she possessed ignited her imagination, and so Dye-Walker’s book, *Twelve Months to LiveÂ…Again*, was born.

Dye-Walker takes readers on a day-by-day journey through a process of deep emotional healing and weight loss in journal entries that describe her difficulties with self-image, relationships, health crises, and chronic illness, along with the joys and successes of an amazingly resilient woman. She describes the writing process as “the best therapy I have ever done, by far.” She details her struggles with medical malpractice, systemic lupus, bulimia, and bi-polar disorder, as well as her four failed marriages, with brutal honesty. “I wanted my trials and tribulations to be a learning experience for others on ‘how not to do things’ that have caused me great pain,” she writes.

The author's conversational style flavored with Texas slang creates a feeling of intimacy and makes for easy reading, but careful editing is suggested to eliminate errors in grammar and usage. While some of the events she describes may be difficult for sensitive readers, the author's example of the resiliency of the human spirit is sure to inspire. She has provided a useful example for others to follow, as many who are on a weight loss program find that their issues with food can only be resolved when deeper life issues are dealt with.

While the author carefully records her weight loss (from 226 pounds to 167 in just under a year) at the opening of each chapter, readers would benefit from knowing what steps or program she followed to produce such steady weight loss, and how her relationship with food changed as she dealt with her life issues.

Dye-Walker has been a professional model and a construction and development contractor. She excelled in the field of public relations, and was featured in a 1985 industry publication as one of the top ten women in the construction industry.

Although the author's Christian faith helped sustain her, her story can be appreciated by those of other faiths-or none at all. It is suggested that a non-religious cover design might broaden access to her work and further her goal of encouraging a diverse readership to forgive, celebrate life, and open their hearts to love.