ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

POETRY

Waking Spirit: Prose & Poems the Spirit Sings
Shirley Cheng
978-0-615-13680-6
Four Stars (out of Five)

This book is an amazing read by an amazing person. While shops and shelves are piled with inspirational and self-help books written by people with disabilities only luck can lead the reader to an author capable of transporting them to a world outside the normal and understood. Shirley Cheng is one of these lucky finds driven as she is to help others understand the lives of the disabled.

Helen Keller's autobiography was one of the first books written by a person with a disability that deeply impacted the lives of many people throughout the world. But until Keller began her writing career most people with disabilities were consigned to the background of society; often hidden away from contact with all others except for members of their own families. Keller made it possible for those with disabilities to come out of the shadows to push for education and the same rights as all other members of society. This 'civil rights' movement continues today with the 1990 passage of the American's with Disabilities Act.

Shirley Cheng follows a long list of authors both children and adults who have overcome enormous difficulties to teach others about how to deal with adversity as well as how to find the good in spite of the difficulties that come the way of all who live on this earth. Nobody who is different in any way shape or form enjoys being told to quit wallowing in self-pity! Cheng is one person who has never allowed her differences to dictate her attitude towards life. She not only appreciates life as a gift but expresses gratitude to her mother for her positive outlook on life and to the existence with which her Heavenly Father has blessed her. No matter what Cheng views her life as an opportunity to make the most of and views her differences as giving her a unique outlook on life.

Waking Spirit is a collection of poetry of different types including haiku quotations and essays that embody Cheng's positive attitude towards life and strategies for dealing with adversity. Her writing is very accessible and enjoyable as she "shows without telling" without arrogance or preachiness.

This book is an expression of joy of wonder and of passion for life. It teaches simple

truths and lifelong lessons that are often overlooked in the current complex world. Sometimes it is necessary to read about another's experiences to gain a clear perspective. Shirley Cheng reminds readers of those blessings that are too often taken for granted.

Karen L. Sadler