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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Wander: Memories of a Quebec Backwoods Girlhood
Rose-Aimee
Epigraph
978-0-9830517-4-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

In this detailed memoir, Rose-Aimee recounts her, unusual experiences growing up in a cabin in the woods of Quebec during the Great Depression, a time she refers to as a self-imposed exile, when her family lived a pioneer-like existence while most others in Canada enjoyed modern conveniences.

Born in 1938, in Degele, Quebec, to parents who came from wealthy families, her immediate family fell on hard times after an unexplained indiscretion by her father, which she later believed to be a crime-related act that resulted in him going to jail. The incident created friction between her parents, and as the eldest child, Rose-Aimee began to take on adult responsibilities at a young age, beginning when she was five years old. She often cared for her four younger siblings in her father's absence as he travelled to work as a lumberjack and when her mother needed to leave the home to find food and other necessities. Because her mother also suffered from depression, Rose-Aimee also nurtured her siblings, even though she received little outward signs of affection from her mother herself.

As she reflects on her early life sixty years later, she offers small glimpses of the contrasts between her current comfortable lifestyle in Manchester, New Hampshire, and her challenging experiences as a child, when the family lived without electricity, made their own soap (which took a few days to complete), and grew vegetables in the garden as a necessity, not as a hobby, as she does now. She even includes a few recipes of the types of meals they ate, such as meat pie, the dessert sucre a la crème, and Canadian dumplings. These contrasts between her earlier life and her life today offer the most interest to a wide audience, but Rose-Aimee does not explore these aspects fully. As a result, there is little appeal for readers outside of her own family. Many of the minute descriptions of her parents and grandparents and their homes will be enlightening primarily to her own family, particularly her children, stepchildren, and grandchildren, to whom she dedicates the book.

The organization of the book is also disjointed, and the non-linear narrative is not

cohesive. The first section includes an overview of her life in the cabin, and later sections narrow in on specific aspects of those times, such as a profile of her mother, a sibling's birth, and additional details about life in the log cabin, but in the process, several details are repeated.

Rose-Aimee has written a deeply personal memoir that will be educational for her family, but a wider context is needed to engage readers outside of her family.

Maria Siano