



An Eventful Life

Will Parker

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Humor and a quick wit make Parker's memoir a pleasant, breezy read.

Will Parker shares memories of his lifetime in this mostly lighthearted telling of growing up in his native Australia, and later travels and adventures around the world. Nearly ninety years old now, Parker is a rascally raconteur, recalling the people, places, and events in the very aptly titled *An Eventful Life*.

Calling it a “social history” and begun as a request for information by a granddaughter, Parker traces important events in his life fairly chronologically and with little emphasis on actual dates. It’s a format that works well with the pleasant, chummy style of storytelling, as he begins by describing how he traveled along with his parents as a youngster while they showed silent films to audiences all over Australia during the early motion picture era.

Serving up family history along with actual history lessons on the area he grew up in, it becomes readily apparent that Parker is the kind of man who grasps life fully and faces challenges head on. After completing a five-year apprenticeship and working as a toolmaker, he “soon found life was becoming too predictable,” so he joined the Royal Australian Navy. Other stints include serving in the British Merchant Navy, teaching Maori students in New Zealand, and working in the corporate world.

Through it all, the author maintains his self-deprecating wit; briefly mentioning his father’s possible PTSD from serving in the Great War and how it affected the family, Parker quips: “I’ve often joked that I was not brought up but knocked down and told to get up.”

Other favorite topics include fisticuffs, cars, and girls—and not necessarily in that order. Humor shines throughout, such when his uncle explains to him how important it is for a young dating man to have a vehicle: “[He] once said that before going to a dance, he sometimes rubbed a little sump oil into his hair so that girls would think he owned a car.”

More emphasis seems to be placed on the author’s earlier years; later years appear to be glossed over, although the current health travails with his wife, Ianthe, are heartbreaking.

This is a quick, breezy read. It might benefit from the possible inclusion of a map of the area of Australia he mentions quite frequently and fondly, so readers can more easily visualize his references. Tighter editing for grammar and punctuation is also suggested. Nearly two dozen black-and-white photos enhance the text; a picture of him and Ianthe would be a plus.

He puts a little perspective on having lived a long, full life by imparting some wisdom to his grown son: “When you are young or approaching middle age, then there *may be* criticisms to which you can attach some significance, but when you are ninety (all but), then you do as you please.”

This pleasant little memoir will appeal to those who enjoy reading about the lives of others, the culture and customs of another country, and how childhood has evolved over the past eighty years.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (October 26, 2015)

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