

Following My Dreams

Garland W. Yarborough

Newman Springs Publishing

(237pp)

978-1-63881-836-6

Following My Dreams is a physician's memoir about perseverance and intergenerational inspiration.

Garland W. Yarborough's memoir *Following My Dreams* covers his rural origins, showing how they helped to shape him into an influential physician.

Born in 1949, Yarborough grew up in an "impoverished small town" in Oklahoma. In sharing memories of that time, he leans into anecdotes, as with details of privation. His family only had electricity at home, not other amenities, he writes; when they took a bath, it was behind their potbellied stove, with soap, water, and a small basin. Early on, he "knew that there had to be something better in life."

Indicting a school counselor and a principal with trying to jeopardize his education and his college enrollment, the book also notes that Yarborough never gave up on his personal ambitions. He writes about overcoming challenges like a "poor" public school education, as well as the hurdle of never having been considered intelligent enough to become a doctor. He recalls that people around him expressed doubts when he shared his aspirations. Nonetheless, he obtained degrees from Wake Forest, Vanderbilt, and Northwestern and contributed to drug and colon cancer studies.

In part a testimonial work that uses Yarborough's story as an example for others, this book—the first volume in a planned series—lists Yarborough's personal successes as an encouragement to "not let people get in your way." It dispenses solid but generalized advice, intoning "Never give up on your dreams even in the face of a major adversity." In defense of this stance, Yarborough notes "I did not give up, and my dreams came true."

Still, the book is often too personal to achieve its inspirational goals, as when it includes information regarding Yarborough's ancestors to inform the generations that follow him on their perhaps-unknown family lore. Further, not all of Yarborough's later successes are covered in depth in this volume: it ends with his graduation from high school in 1967. Nonetheless, it works to describe the people he encountered in his early years in both physical terms and when it comes to how they impacted him; his family's dynamics are well detailed. And the book reflects upon the differences between Yarborough's childhood and those of his own children in a compelling manner, putting both kinds of experiences into perspective.

Covering a period of almost two decades in terms of "the good and bad situations that made up my life experiences," *Following My Dreams* is a physician's memoir about perseverance and intergenerational inspiration.

ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (March 1, 2023)

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