



Gathering No Moss: Memoir of a Reluctant World Traveler

Don Feeney

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With celebratory memories gathered from across decades of a globe-trotting military career, Gathering No Moss is an enthusiastic memoir.

Don Feeney recalls a lifetime of learning, travel, and looking for love in his memoir *Gathering No Moss*.

Growing up poor in Pittsburgh in the 1960s, Feeney's main ambitions were to play sports and to rebel in class. Not even college and the opportunities it offered could make him take life seriously. But after losing a coin toss to his soon-to-be-ex-wife and in an attempt to avoid the "life of quiet desperation" that destroyed his father physically and mentally, Feeney joined the air force. This single event changed his life, allowing him to see the world, meet the love of his life, and pursue a career more difficult and more rewarding than he had imagined for himself.

Its prose affable and self-deprecating, the book shares details of a military and diplomatic life over the course of four decades. The emergent picture captures career positives well, including beautiful scenery in disparate places and even the successful changes that Feeney implemented at his various workplaces. It also highlights a few negatives, including his wife's health challenges and unhelpful people whom he had to work with. Still, as it traipses through numerous setbacks and challenges, it searches for the good in these circumstances, making their coverage enjoyable and uplifting too. Indeed, Feeney imparts a clear sense that personal satisfaction is incumbent on understanding that even temporary experiences and relationships have their own kind of value and are worth the time put into them.

The bulk of the book's enthusiasm is reserved for the many places that it names, including Germany, Hawaii, Australia, and El Salvador. During his stops here and elsewhere, Feeney recalls relishing his chances to meet new people and learn about places that he had not dreamed of seeing before. In the process of celebrating Feeney's travels, though, the book ends up idealizing aspects of life in several places, oversimplifying complex issues including race relations and health care.

Limited photographs flesh out some of the people and places mentioned (Feeney admits that many of his personal images have been lost). Further, some outdated terminology is employed, the book's conversations are improperly formatted, and a comment about Natalee Holloway's probable killer comes across as tasteless.

All experiences are valuable, claims an air force man in his memoir *Gathering No Moss*, about the unexpected military career that allowed him to see the world.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May 11, 2023)

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