

Just Laugh About It: Improve Your Health Reduce Your Stress and Tensions

Sid Baron

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Sid Baron an entrepreneur with a jokester's soul writes his memoir with seven decades of hindsight. He undertakes the daunting task of recalling his life with a chronological series of practical jokes that he has pulled on friends work associates and strangers. The concept is intriguing but difficult to pull off.

The book opens with Richard a brash self-assured university student hired to repair mechanical systems for the author's business: Baron's TV and Radio. Baron and an associate set up an elaborate play to deliver an electrical shock to the egocentric Richard. Baron provides a step-by-step account of the joke's development and delivers the punch line or in this case the shock with a deft twist. The point of the joke remains unclear; readers never learn the fate of Richard after he runs screaming from the shop. The author attempts to justify more disturbing jokes with a disclaimer: "It really was a cruel joke but...probably everyone who witnessed it that day would frequently retell the story over the next forty years."

Chapter after chapter describes practical jokes targeting a wide array of unsuspecting caring gullible and likeable innocents. The jokes have a "had to be there" element and today's reader may not embrace this Candid Camera style of humor. Perhaps this form of comedy was better received in the 1940s and '50s and would be appreciated by an audience of the author's peers.

Baron continually reminds readers that laughter is healthy and reduces stress. The author gives several examples of times laughter has seen him through difficult times. He built his own successful business from scratch fought off bankruptcy and faced near-blindness a side effect of Multiple Sclerosis. The book ends with the assurance that laughter has helped him overcome his obstacles.

The writing flows in an energetic easy-to-read style yet the jokes fail to convey the humanity and evocative layers that make up Sid Baron. They fall short in telling the rich texture of a challenging life joyfully lived. A few less jokes more empathy toward the targets of the jokes and more relevant business-related insights as well as a more multi-faceted look at the man and his times might give the book greater appeal to a wider audience.

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